2017 COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

PLAYOFF PREDICTIONS

1. ALABAMA
2. OHIO STATE
3. FLORIDA STATE
4. WASHINGTON

ALABAMA QB
JALEN HURTS

PREVIEWS OF ALL 130 FBS TEAMS

RECRUITING RANKINGS

THE TOP 50 PLAYERS OF THE ATHLON ERA

&

TOP 50 INNOVATIONS IN COLLEGE FOOTBALL

OHIO STATE QB
J.T. BARRETT

FLORIDA STATE QB
DEONDRE FRANCOIS

WASHINGTON QB
JAKE BROWNING

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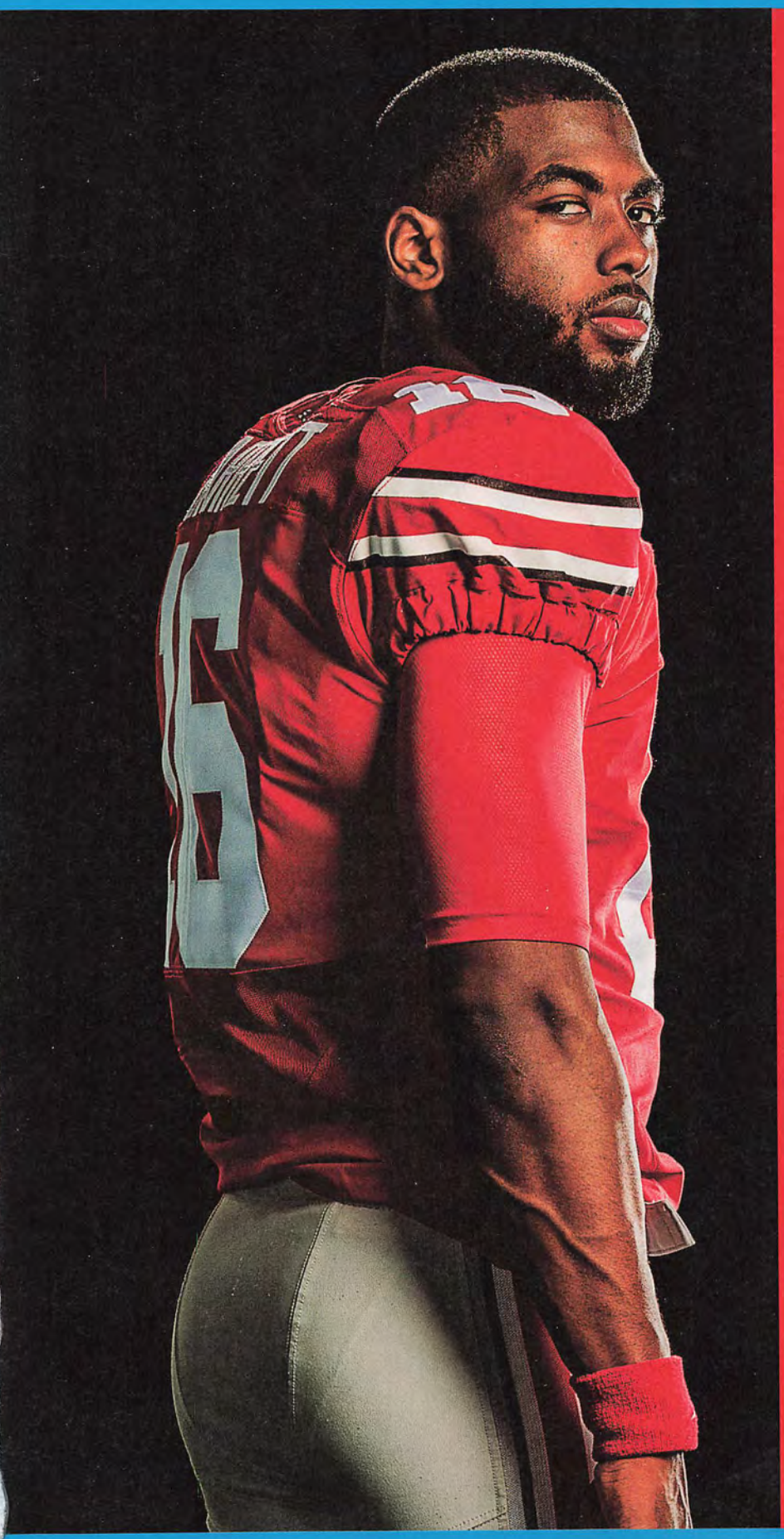


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STRIKE A POSE

In a star-studded 2017 season, no one will shine brighter than Ohio State quarterback J.T. Barrett, Clemson defensive lineman Christian Wilkins and Louisville quarterback Lamar Jackson, the reigning Heisman Trophy winner. After posing for the *Athlon Sports* cameras during the offseason, this trio and their fellow superstars will make college football this fall's must-see viewing option.

Photography: Barrett, Jackson: Matt Hernandez; Wilkins: Harrison McClary/ Athlon Sports





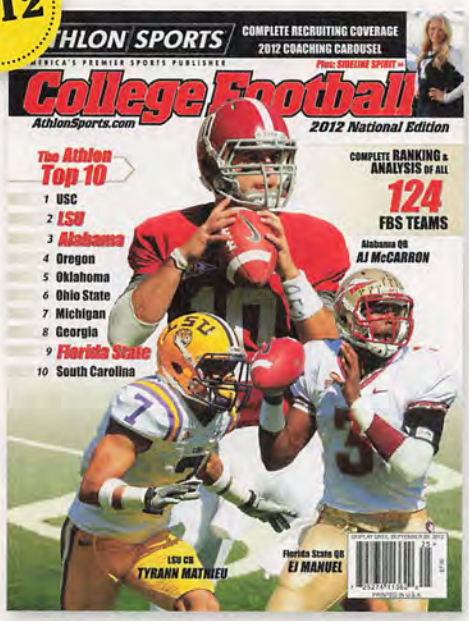
Athlon Sports FOOTBALL Throwback Covers

REVISITING OUR 2007 AND 2012 ANNUALS

2007



2012



In football terms, a decade can feel like a lifetime. The cover subjects on our 2007 National College Football edition are mere footnotes today, at least in football terms. Tim Tebow, one of the greatest players in college football history (see our story on the 50 Greatest Players of the Athlon Era on page 46 to see how highly we think of him), is a baseball player now, for pete's sake. Speaking of Pete (Carroll), John David Booty, once thought of as an heir to Carroll's Heisman legacy at the USC quarterback position, suffered through an injury-plagued 2007 season, his last in Troy, and barely rose above practice squadder at the next level. P.J. Hill, a talented and productive running back in the Wisconsin tradition, never had an NFL carry.

Our 2012 cover subjects are a bit more football-relevant, although recency helps. Tyrann Mathieu is a Pro Bowler; EJ Manuel has held a lot of clipboards, but he's still drawing NFL paychecks; and AJ McCarron married Katherine Webb, so he has that going for him, which is nice.

No matter what happens from here, or how history treats them five or 10 years from now — even if one of them winds up pursuing a baseball career at age 29 — the players on the cover of the magazine you're holding are relevant today. And we'd like to think they're grateful for the plug, for them and, more importantly, for the teams they'll be representing as another eagerly awaited season dawns.

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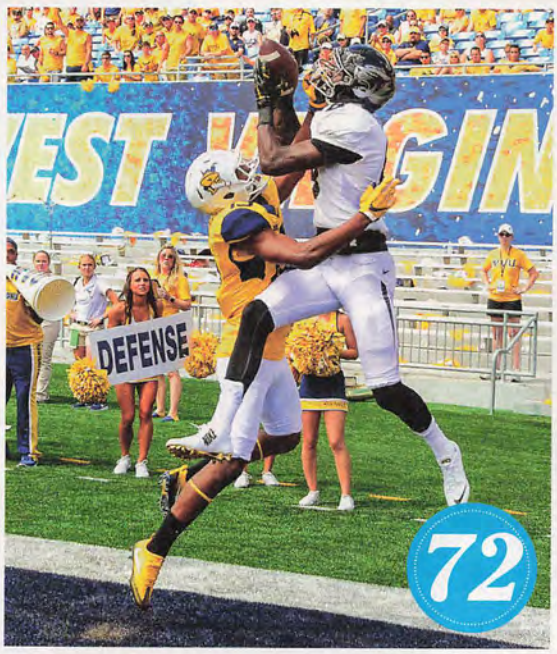


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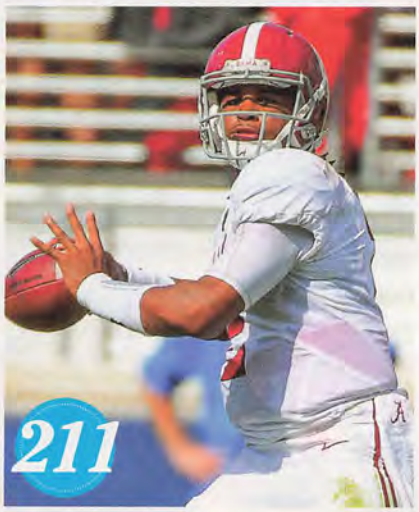
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TEAM INDEX

This is an alphabetical listing and page location for all 130 FBS team previews. Starting on page 88, the previews are organized according to conference.







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ATHLON SPORTS PRESEASON 130 FBS RANKINGS

1. Alabama
2. Ohio State
3. Florida State
4. Washington
5. USC
6. Penn State
7. Clemson
8. Oklahoma
9. Auburn
10. Michigan
11. LSU
12. Wisconsin
13. Texas
14. Oklahoma State
15. Georgia
16. Florida
17. Stanford
18. Louisville
19. Tennessee
20. Notre Dame
21. Oregon
22. Kansas State
23. Miami
24. USF
25. Virginia Tech
26. West Virginia
27. NC State
28. Washington State
29. Arkansas
30. Mississippi State
31. Pittsburgh
32. TCU
33. UCLA
34. Colorado
35. Boise State
36. Georgia Tech
37. Texas A&M
38. Utah
39. BYU
40. South Carolina
41. Northwestern
42. North Carolina
43. Nebraska
44. Iowa
45. Kentucky
46. Ole Miss
47. Baylor
48. Vanderbilt
49. Michigan State
50. Minnesota
51. Memphis
52. Wake Forest
53. Arizona State
54. Indiana
55. Missouri
56. Navy
57. Maryland
58. Colorado State
59. Houston
60. Iowa State
61. San Diego State
62. Duke
63. Syracuse
64. Texas Tech
65. Oregon State
66. Arizona
67. Appalachian State
68. Troy
69. Toledo
70. Boston College
71. Louisiana Tech
72. Wyoming
73. WKU
74. Tulsa
75. Middle Tennessee
76. California
77. Air Force
78. Miami (Ohio)
79. UCF
80. Army
81. Temple
82. SMU
83. Western Michigan
84. Purdue
85. Ohio
86. Arkansas State
87. Virginia
88. Hawaii
89. Kansas
90. Old Dominion
91. Rutgers
92. Illinois
93. Southern Miss
94. UTSA
95. Cincinnati
96. New Mexico
97. Utah State
98. FAU
99. Northern Illinois
100. Tulane
101. Connecticut
102. Eastern Michigan
103. South Alabama
104. Idaho
105. UNLV
106. Central Michigan
107. Marshall
108. North Texas
109. Akron
110. Louisiana
111. Georgia Southern
112. East Carolina
113. FIU
114. Bowling Green
115. Nevada
116. Ball State
117. Fresno State
118. Rice
119. ULM
120. UTEP
121. Georgia State
122. San Jose State
123. Buffalo
124. Coastal Carolina
125. New Mexico State
126. Charlotte
127. Kent State
128. UMass
129. Texas State
130. UAB


JAUAN JENNINGS, TENNESSEE


JUSTIN JACKSON, NORTHWESTERN


TERENCE WILLIAMS, BAYLOR

Jennings: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Jackson: Tom Lynn; Williams: Tim Umphrey

CONFERENCE PREDICTIONS

Records are projections for the 2017 season, overall and conference, through the regular season and conference championship games

ACC

ATLANTIC

1. Florida State 12-1, 8-0
2. Clemson 10-2, 6-2
3. Louisville 9-3, 5-3
4. NC State 7-5, 4-4
5. Wake Forest 6-6, 3-5
6. Syracuse 5-7, 2-6
7. Boston College 5-7, 2-6

COASTAL

1. Miami 9-4, 5-3
2. Virginia Tech 9-3, 5-3
3. Pittsburgh 7-5, 5-3
4. Georgia Tech 7-5, 4-4
5. North Carolina 7-5, 4-4
6. Duke 4-8, 2-6
7. Virginia 3-9, 1-7

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Florida State over Miami

AMERICAN ATHLETIC

EAST

1. USF 12-1, 7-1
2. UCF 7-5, 5-3
3. Temple 6-6, 4-4
4. Cincinnati 4-8, 2-6
5. UConn 3-9, 2-6
6. East Carolina 3-9, 2-6

WEST

1. Memphis 9-4, 6-2
2. Navy 8-4, 5-3
3. Houston 7-5, 5-3
4. Tulsa 7-5, 5-3
5. SMU 6-6, 3-5
6. Tulane 4-8, 2-6

AAC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

USF over Memphis

BIG 12

1. Oklahoma 11-2, 8-1
2. Texas 9-4, 7-2
3. Oklahoma State 9-3, 6-3
4. Kansas State 8-4, 5-4
5. West Virginia 7-5, 5-4
6. TCU 7-5, 5-4
7. Baylor 6-6, 3-6
8. Iowa State 5-7, 3-6
9. Texas Tech 5-7, 3-6
10. Kansas 3-9, 0-9

BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Oklahoma over Texas

BIG TEN

EAST

1. Ohio State 12-1, 8-1
2. Penn State 10-2, 7-2
3. Michigan 10-2, 7-2
4. Michigan State 6-6, 4-5
5. Indiana 7-5, 4-5
6. Maryland 6-6, 4-5
7. Rutgers 3-9, 1-8

WEST

1. Wisconsin 10-3, 7-2
2. Northwestern 8-4, 5-4
3. Nebraska 7-5, 5-4
4. Iowa 7-5, 4-5
5. Minnesota 6-6, 4-5
6. Purdue 3-9, 2-7
7. Illinois 2-10, 1-8

BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Ohio State over Wisconsin

CONFERENCE USA

EAST

1. WKU 9-4, 6-2
2. Middle Tennessee 7-5, 6-2
3. Old Dominion 7-5, 5-3
4. FAU 6-6, 4-4
5. Marshall 5-7, 4-4
6. FIU 5-7, 4-4
7. Charlotte 3-9, 1-7

WEST

1. Louisiana Tech 9-4, 6-2
2. Southern Miss 7-5, 5-3
3. UTSA 7-5, 5-3
4. North Texas 5-7, 3-5
5. Rice 3-9, 3-5
6. UTEP 3-9, 3-5
7. UAB 3-9, 1-7

C-USA CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Louisiana Tech over WKU

INDEPENDENTS

1. Notre Dame 8-4
2. BYU 9-4
3. Army 7-5
4. UMass 2-10

MAC

EAST

1. Miami (Ohio) 8-5, 6-2
2. Ohio 7-5, 5-3
3. Akron 5-7, 4-4
4. Bowling Green 4-8, 3-5
5. Buffalo 3-9, 2-6
6. Kent State 3-9, 2-6

WEST

1. Toledo 10-3, 6-2
2. Western Michigan 7-5, 5-3
3. Northern Illinois 6-6, 5-3
4. Eastern Michigan 5-7, 4-4
5. Central Michigan 5-7, 4-4
6. Ball State 4-8, 2-6

MAC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Toledo over Miami (Ohio)

MOUNTAIN WEST

MOUNTAIN

1. Boise State 10-3, 7-1
2. Colorado State 8-4, 6-2
3. Wyoming 7-5, 5-3
4. Air Force 6-6, 4-4
5. New Mexico 6-6, 4-4
6. Utah State 4-8, 3-5

WEST

1. San Diego State 8-5, 6-2
2. Hawaii 7-5, 5-3
3. UNLV 4-8, 3-5
4. Nevada 3-9, 2-6
5. Fresno State 3-9, 2-6
6. San Jose State 2-11, 1-7

MW CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Boise State over San Diego State

PAC-12

NORTH

1. Washington 12-1, 8-1
2. Stanford 9-3, 6-3
3. Oregon 8-4, 5-4
4. Washington State 8-4, 5-4
5. Oregon State 5-7, 3-6
6. California 3-9, 2-7

SOUTH

1. USC 11-2, 8-1
2. UCLA 7-5, 5-4
3. Colorado 7-5, 4-5
4. Utah 7-5, 4-5
5. Arizona State 5-7, 2-7
6. Arizona 5-7, 2-7

PAC-12 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Washington over USC

SEC

EAST

1. Georgia 9-4, 6-2
2. Florida 8-4, 6-2
3. Tennessee 8-4, 4-4
4. South Carolina 6-6, 4-4
5. Kentucky 7-5, 4-4
6. Vanderbilt 6-6, 3-5
7. Missouri 5-7, 1-7

WEST

1. Alabama 12-1, 7-1
2. Auburn 9-3, 6-2
3. LSU 9-3, 5-3
4. Arkansas 7-5, 3-5
5. Mississippi State 7-5, 3-5
6. Texas A&M 7-5, 3-5
7. Ole Miss 5-7, 1-7

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Alabama over Georgia

SUN BELT

1. Appalachian State 9-3, 7-1
2. Troy 9-3, 7-1
3. Arkansas State 7-5, 6-2
4. South Alabama 6-6, 5-3
5. Idaho 6-6, 4-4
6. Louisiana 5-7, 4-4
7. Georgia Southern 5-7, 4-4
8. ULM 4-8, 4-4
9. Georgia State 3-9, 2-6
10. Coastal Carolina 4-8, 2-6
11. New Mexico State 3-9, 2-6
12. Texas State 2-10, 1-7

2017 Athlon Awards

They're the teams within the team — those cohesive little units bound together by their shared responsibilities within the larger team context. For the 17th year, Athlon recognizes the best of the best at each position.

TOP QB UNITS

1. OKLAHOMA

The combination of quarterback Baker Mayfield and coordinator Lincoln Riley has helped guide Oklahoma to back-to-back Big 12 titles, and another monster season appears to be in store for the Sooners' offense. Mayfield set a new FBS record in passing efficiency last year with a 196.4 mark while also throwing for 3,965 yards and 40 scores. He also ranked first nationally by completing 70.9 percent of his passes. While the senior had only 177 rushing yards in 2016, Mayfield's elusiveness and mobility make it hard for opposing defenses to contain him within the pocket.

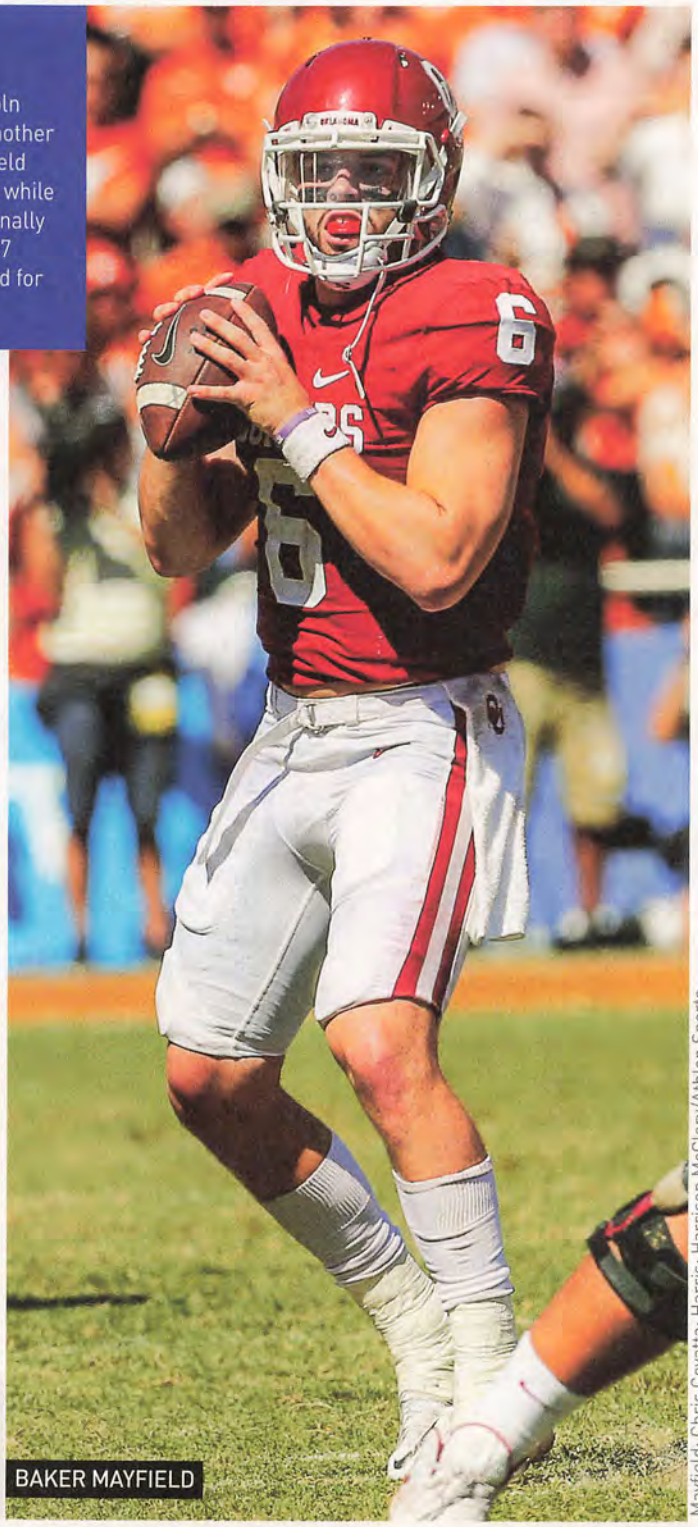
2. USC Sam Darnold's cool demeanor and playmaking ability helped USC rally from a 1–3 start to a 10–3 final record capped off by a Rose Bowl victory over Penn State. Darnold is accurate in the pocket and on the move, helping generate big plays for a Trojans attack that averaged 33.2 points in Pac-12 games last year. Darnold finished 2016 with 3,086 yards and 31 passing touchdowns, and his 8.4 yards-per-attempt average ranked second in the Pac-12. Darnold should flourish as a sophomore.

3. LOUISVILLE After hoisting the Heisman Trophy last year, Lamar Jackson has set the bar high for 2017. In his first full season as the starter, the Florida native rewrote the Louisville record book with 5,114 total yards and 51 touchdowns. Jackson is one of college football's most dynamic players with the ball in his hands and a threat to score on every touch. The junior is still developing as a passer and needs to improve his accuracy after completing 56.2 percent of his throws last year.

4. OHIO STATE With another season at the controls of Urban Meyer's high-powered offense, J.T. Barrett will finish his career as one of the most prolific quarterbacks in Ohio State history. In three seasons with the Buckeyes, Barrett has passed for 6,381 yards and 69 scores and added 2,465 yards and 31 touchdowns on the ground. His 100 career touchdowns accounted for are the most by any Ohio State quarterback. Barrett should benefit from the addition of Kevin Wilson as coordinator after the Buckeyes struggled to find consistency on offense last year. The backup situation is in good hands with Dwayne Haskins and Joe Burrow.

5. WASHINGTON Jake Browning's development was a big reason why Washington earned a trip to the CFB Playoff last season. After a solid freshman season in 2015, Browning threw for 3,430 yards and 43 scores in 14 starts last year. Additionally, Browning led all Pac-12 quarterbacks by connecting on 13 passes of 40 or more yards. Offseason shoulder surgery isn't expected to slow Browning any by fall camp, but the Huskies must find a replacement for big-play threat and top receiver John Ross.

6. Oklahoma State 7. Washington State 8. USF 9. Penn State 10. Alabama
11. UCLA 12. Auburn 13. Florida State 14. Arkansas 15. Mississippi State
16. Toledo 17. Middle Tennessee 18. WKU 19. Boise State 20. Wyoming
21. Georgia 22. Oregon 23. Ole Miss 24. South Carolina 25. Memphis



BAKER MAYFIELD

Mayfield: Chris Covatta; Harris: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports



DAMIEN HARRIS

TOP RB UNITS

1. ALABAMA

The 2017 Crimson Tide offense could feature the deepest backfield of Nick Saban's Alabama tenure. Damien Harris (1,037 yards) led the team in rushing last season, but Bo Scarbrough was the Tide's best back late in the year (he averaged 113.5 yards over the final four games). Harris and Scarbrough are back to lead the ground attack, with Josh Jacobs contributing as a change-of-pace or third-down option. True freshman and five-star recruit Najee Harris impressed during spring practice and is expected to have a prominent role. Sophomore B.J. Emmons is another name to watch.

2. GEORGIA Now a full year removed from a devastating knee injury, Nick Chubb should resemble the player who rushed for 1,547 yards as a freshman in 2014. In his return to the lineup last season, Chubb led the Georgia ground attack with 1,130 yards and eight scores. Sony Michel is just as dangerous on the ground, as he ranked second on the team with 840 yards and four scores in 2016. The Chubb-Michel combination could be the nation's best backfield tandem in 2017. Brian Herrien (363 yards) impressed in his first action with the Bulldogs last season. Freshman D'Andre Swift and sophomore Elijah Holyfield round out this unit.

3. PENN STATE The nation's No. 1 running back resides in Happy Valley this year. Saquon Barkley returns for his junior campaign after back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons. Barkley is the first player at Penn State since Evan Royster to accomplish that feat and has accumulated 2,572 yards over the last two years. He's poised for a career season in 2017 thanks to an improved offensive line. Miles Sanders (184 yards) and Andre Robinson (141) are former top recruits who showed promise in limited snaps as freshmen in 2016.

4. FLORIDA STATE The Seminoles lose one of the nation's top running backs (Dalvin Cook) yet won't miss a beat on the ground in 2017. That's due to the arrival of five-star recruit Cam Akers, who rushed for 5,103 yards and 71 scores in a standout Mississippi high school career. He's due to play a major role in the backfield from the first snap, but junior Jacques Patrick — a 231-pound power back — is likely to share carries after working as Cook's backup the last two seasons. Amir Rasul and Khalan Laborn are also in the mix for snaps.

5. AUBURN Kamryn Pettway's 2016 season was derailed by injuries late in the year, but the breakout star still finished with 1,224 yards and seven scores. He's back to anchor the ground attack once again, and Kerryon Johnson (895 yards) returns to provide a big-play threat to complement Pettway's power for coach Gus Malzahn. There's depth behind Pettway and Johnson with redshirt freshman Malik Miller and sophomore Kam Martin. With the addition of quarterback Jarrett Stidham, this backfield may find increased running room thanks to a more balanced attack.

6. Arkansas 7. LSU 8. Washington 9. Ohio State 10. Oregon 11. Northwestern 12. USC
13. West Virginia 14. Western Michigan 15. Vanderbilt 16. Texas A&M 17. Michigan
18. Minnesota 19. TCU 20. Stanford 21. Pittsburgh 22. Michigan State 23. Arizona State
24. Maryland 25. Notre Dame



JAMES WASHINGTON

TOP WR/TE UNITS

1. OKLAHOMA STATE

Oklahoma State's lethal passing game could be even better in 2017. Quarterback Mason Rudolph and receiver James Washington considered early departures to the NFL but decided to return for their senior campaigns. Washington has led the team in receiving yards in each of the last two seasons and boasts a career average of 19.2 yards per catch. LSU transfer Tyron Johnson joins the mix, while Jalen McCleskey (73 catches) is back, and Marcell Ateman returns after sitting out 2016 due to an injury.

2. CLEMSON In addition to replacing star quarterback Deshaun Watson, the Tigers lost three out of last year's top four receiving threats. However, thanks to coach Dabo Swinney's work on the recruiting trail, a quick reload is in order. Big-play threat Deon Cain is likely to be the No. 1 receiver after averaging 19.1 yards per catch in 2016. Hunter Renfrow has been a sure-handed option over the last two years and was the hero of the national championship with a game-winning touchdown catch. He's due for a bigger role. Ray-Ray McCloud, Trevion Thompson, Cornell Powell and top recruits Tee Higgins and Amari Rodgers round out a deep and talented group of options.

3. PENN STATE Chris Godwin left early for the NFL, but quarterback Trace McSorley isn't hurting for playmakers at receiver. DaeSean Hamilton was the team's top receiver in 2014 and has thrived in a complementary role the last two seasons. He's due to step into the No. 1 role once again, with tight end Mike Gesicki the preferred big-play option after averaging 14.2 yards per catch in 2016. DeAndre Thompkins and Saeed Blacknall combined for 42 receptions last season and will team with Irvin Charles and Juwan Johnson to round out the key threats for McSorley.

4. FLORIDA Under Jim McElwain's direction, this unit has slowly morphed from a weakness into a strength. Antonio Callaway has led the team in receiving yards over the last two seasons and could be poised for his first 1,000-yard campaign with new quarterback Feleipe Franks at the controls. Brandon Powell (45 catches) is a reliable No. 2, but McElwain is eager to utilize Tyrie Cleveland more after Cleveland averaged a healthy 21.3 yards per catch in 2016. Dre Massey also returns after missing nearly all of last season due to a knee injury. DeAndre Goolsby, C'yontai Lewis and true freshman Kemore Gamble provide a trio of options at tight end.

5. COLORADO The Buffaloes return their top six statistical wide receivers from last season, which should ease the transition for new quarterback Steven Montez. Shay Fields led the team with 883 yards and nine scores, but Devin Ross (69 catches) and Bryce Bobo (44) are also All-Pac-12 candidates. Jay McIntyre and Kabion Ento return after combining for 40 catches last year, while Juwann Winfree — a top junior college recruit in 2016 — adds depth after sitting out 2016 due to injury.

6. South Carolina 7. Alabama 8. Ole Miss 9. Texas Tech 10. Louisville 11. TCU 12. Missouri 13. Notre Dame 14. Iowa State 15. Washington 16. USC 17. Indiana 18. SMU 19. California 20. Middle Tennessee 21. Ohio State 22. Washington State 23. Florida State 24. Auburn 25. Texas

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ROSS PIERSCHBACHER

1. ALABAMA

Few true freshmen could step into a starting job on the offensive line from Day 1 in the SEC, but that's exactly what Jonah Williams did last season. Williams started all 15 games for the Crimson Tide and is slated to move from right to left tackle to replace Cam Robinson. Stalwarts Ross Pierschbacher (left guard) and Bradley Bozeman (center) anchor the interior. Alabama has some uncertainty on the right side with a mix of candidates vying for spots. However, with four- and five-star talent competing for jobs, it's hard to envision Nick Saban not finding the right answers.

2. OKLAHOMA In order for Oklahoma to challenge for a CFB Playoff bid, the line has to keep opposing defenders away from quarterback Baker Mayfield. That task shouldn't be tough for Bob Stoops' group with all five starters returning. Orlando Brown was selected as the Big 12's Offensive Lineman of the Year in 2016 and is back to anchor this group at left tackle. Right tackle Bobby Evans and left guard Ben Powers are rising stars, with Dru Samia (right guard) and center Erick Wren rounding out the returning starters. Jonathan Alvarez and Cody Ford provide quality depth.

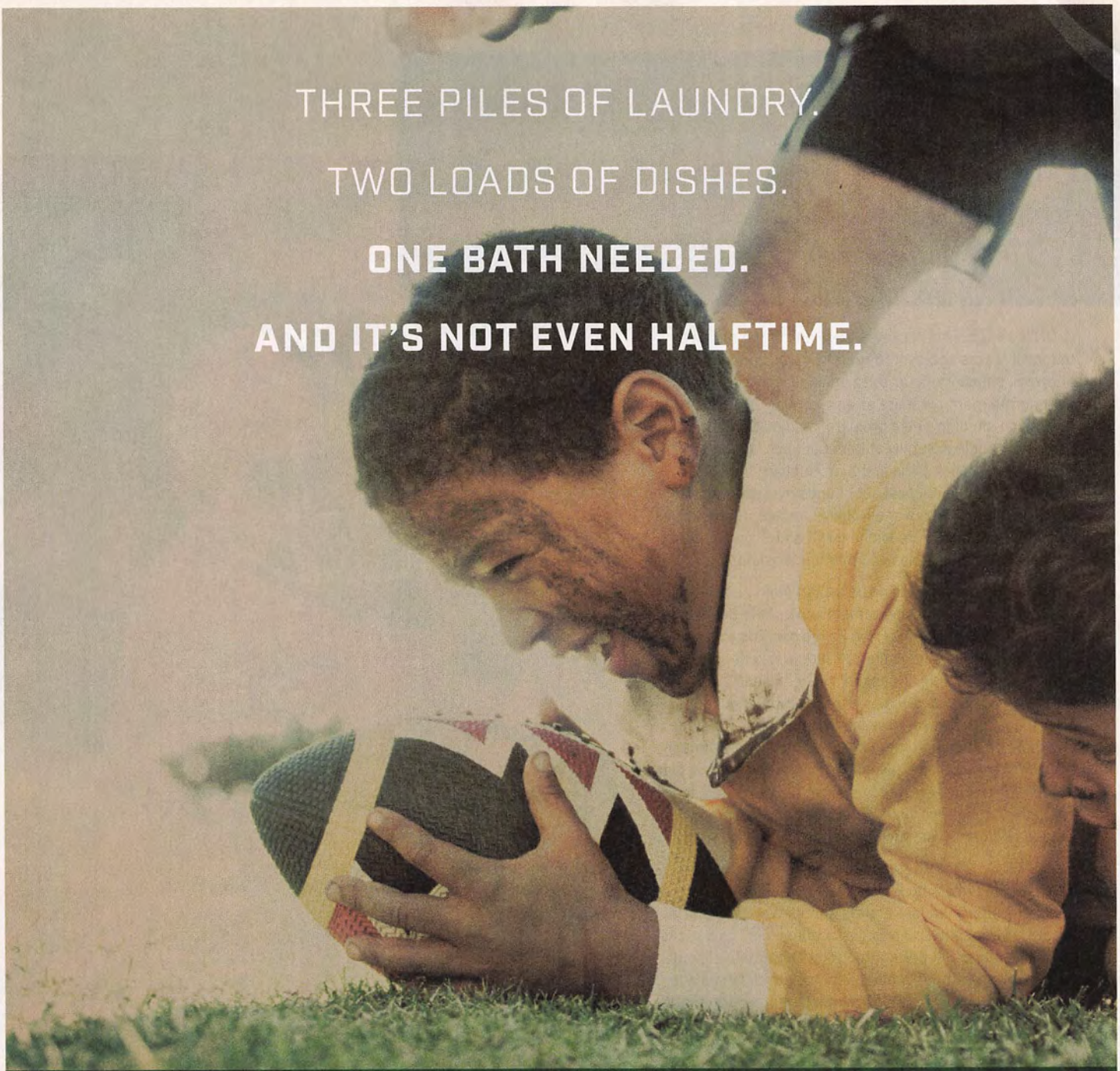
3. CLEMSON Replacing standout center Jay Guillermo won't be easy, but the return of left tackle Mitch Hyatt and guard Tyrone Crowder is more than enough to keep Clemson's offensive line among the best in the nation. Hyatt has started 29 games in his first two seasons on campus and is an *Athlon Sports* preseason second-team All-American. Left guard Taylor Hearn and right tackle Sean Pollard also return, while junior Justin Falcinelli steps into the middle after playing just 174 snaps last year.

4. AUBURN The success of Auburn's high-powered attack starts up front. Last year's group mauled opposing defensive lines in opening holes for the SEC's No. 1 ground game and allowed only 19 sacks in 13 contests. Expect more of the same in 2017, as line coach Herb Hand builds around three returning starters. Tackle Braden Smith is an *Athlon Sports* first-team preseason All-American, while center Austin Golson and tackle Darius James are expected to vie for All-SEC honors. Sophomores Marquel Harrell and Mike Horton are penciled in as the new starters at guard. Graduate transfers Wilson Bell (Florida State) and Casey Dunn (Jacksonville State) provide depth.

5. LSU The Tigers have to do some offseason shuffling here, but the offensive line is an annual strength in Baton Rouge. Will Clapp has emerged as one of the SEC's top linemen over the last two seasons and is slated to slide to center to replace standout Ethan Pocic. Left tackle K.J. Malone — the son of NBA Hall of Famer Karl Malone — and guard Maea Teuhema join Clapp as returning starters, with tackle Toby Weathersby and guard Garrett Brumfield expected to round out the starting five. Last year's line helped LSU lead all Power 5 teams by averaging 6.1 yards per rush.

6. Iowa 7. Washington 8. Kansas State 9. Ohio State 10. Notre Dame 11. Texas 12. Washington State
13. Stanford 14. Kentucky 15. Pitt 16. Oregon 17. Nebraska 18. Wisconsin 19. Missouri 20. TCU
21. Tulsa 22. Colorado 23. Michigan 24. BYU 25. NC State

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports



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A.O. Smith

TOP DL UNITS

1. CLEMSON

The Tigers have led the nation in tackles for a loss in four consecutive years and produced 180 sacks in that span. And the bad news for the ACC: This unit isn't slowing down anytime soon. Christian Wilkins shifts to tackle after playing end last year to team with fellow *Athlon Sports* first-team preseason All-American Dexter Lawrence. Clelin Ferrell recorded six tackles for a loss over the last three games of 2016. He's back at end, while Austin Bryant, Chris Register, Xavier Kelly and Richard Yeargin provide coordinator Brent Venables with a talented and deep wave of pass rushers.

2. OHIO STATE The Buckeyes were one of the nation's toughest teams against the run (3.4 yards per carry allowed), but coordinator Greg Schiano wants the line to generate more pressure after recording 28 sacks in 2016. That shouldn't be a problem, as Ohio State has a seemingly endless supply of talent at end. Tyquan Lewis, Jalyn Holmes, Nick Bosa and Sam Hubbard anchor what could be the deepest set of ends in the nation. At tackle, Dre'Mont Jones and Robert Landers impressed as freshmen, while seniors Michael Hill and Tracy Sprinkle headline the other options competing for snaps.

3. ALABAMA Despite losing Jonathan Allen and Dalvin Tomlinson, Alabama's line remains one of the deepest in the nation. Nose guard Da'Ron Payne anchors this unit. While he won't post huge stats, Payne was a driving force behind Alabama's No. 1-ranked run defense in 2016. Da'Shawn Hand was rated as a five-star prospect out of high school but has yet to reach that potential. He's due to handle a full complement of snaps for the first time in his career and could be poised for a breakout year. Senior Joshua Frazier is expected to start at the other end spot, but junior college recruit Isaiah Buggs and freshman Quinnen Williams will push for snaps.

4. FLORIDA STATE This could be the deepest and best defensive line of Jimbo Fisher's tenure at Florida State — and that's after standout end DeMarcus Walker graduated. Josh Sweat and Brian Burns combined for 16.5 sacks last season and will be counted on even more to pick up the pass rush without Walker. Senior Derrick Nnadi and junior Demarcus Christmas are quiet enforcers on the interior.

5. MICHIGAN With Taco Charlton, Chris Wormley and Ryan Glasgow no longer around, Michigan's line has a few holes to fill — yet still returns as much frontline talent as any in the nation. Rashan Gary ranked as the top prospect in the 2016 recruiting class and showed flashes of potential in a limited role. He's due for a breakout year, while the interior is anchored by senior Maurice Hurst after he recorded 11.5 tackles for a loss in 2016. Junior Chase Winovich (end) and senior Bryan Mone (tackle) round out the starting group. Five-star true freshman Aubrey Solomon will compete for snaps on the interior.

6. Miami (Fla.) 7. NC State 8. Washington 9. Georgia
10. Texas 11. Boston College 12. Utah 13. LSU 14. Florida
15. Kansas State 16. Wisconsin 17. Auburn 18. Virginia Tech
19. Penn State 20. Houston 21. Iowa 22. Wake Forest
23. Ole Miss 24. USC 25. Oklahoma State



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1 package Curly's RoadTrip Eats Alabama Style
7 flour tortillas

Cilantro Slaw

3 cups green and purple cabbage, shredded
1 cup carrot, shredded
1 cup mayonnaise
¼ cup champagne vinegar
1 teaspoon celery seed
2 bunches of cilantro, chopped
¼ cup sugar
salt and pepper

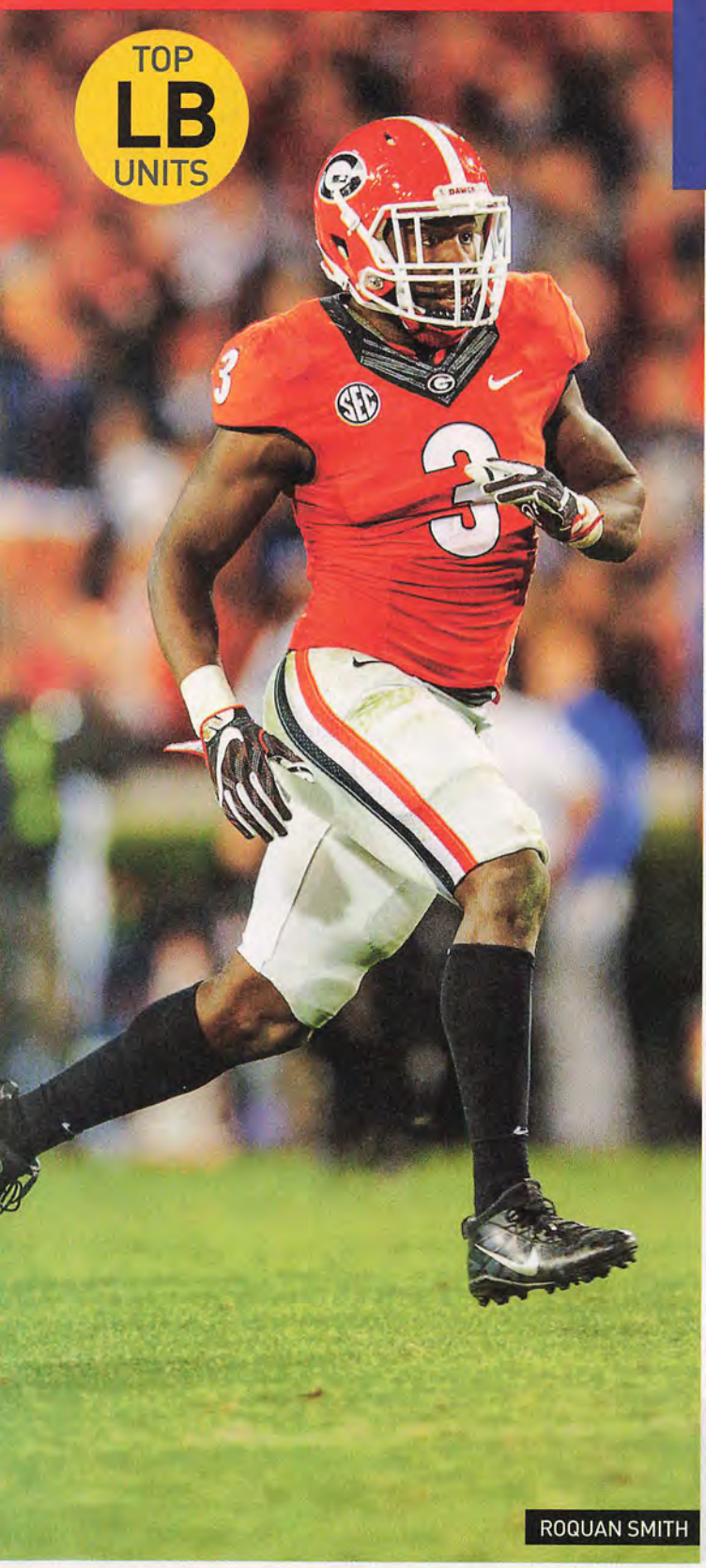
1. Heat oven to 300°. Wrap flour tortillas in aluminum foil and set inside oven to keep warm.
2. Put all slaw ingredients inside large mixing bowl and incorporate evenly, season with salt and pepper as desired.
3. Heat Curly's Alabama Style according to packaged label directions.
4. Remove flour tortillas from oven and assemble tacos, fill with pork belly and cilantro slaw.





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TOP LB UNITS



ROQUAN SMITH

1. GEORGIA

With 11 starters returning, Kirby Smart's defense is expected to take a significant step forward in 2017. Leading the way for this unit is a linebacking corps that features rising star Roquan Smith (95 tackles in 2016) in the middle, while pass rushers Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy are back to wreak havoc around the line of scrimmage after combining for 10 sacks last year. Natrez Patrick will flank Smith on the interior, while the depth is plentiful with Reggie Carter, Chauncey Manac and D'Andre Walker returning.

2. ALABAMA There's a similar theme surrounding Alabama's linebacker unit and defensive line this offseason. A few standouts are gone, but the defense won't miss a beat with the next wave of stars ready to step into new roles. Reuben Foster, Ryan Anderson and Tim Williams leave big shoes to fill this offseason. However, the drop-off should be minimal with seniors Shaun Dion Hamilton and Rashaan Evans back to anchor the interior. Hamilton is recovering from an ACL tear suffered in the SEC Championship Game. Anfernee Jennings, Terrell Hall and Christian Miller will be tasked with replacing the 18 sacks Anderson and Williams combined for in 2016.

3. IOWA Replacing standout cornerback Desmond King and tackle Jaleel Johnson won't be easy, but the Hawkeyes should be tough on defense once again thanks to the linebacker unit. All three starters from last year's standout group return in 2017 for coordinator Phil Parker. Josey Jewell ranked second among Big Ten defenders with 124 stops last season and is entrenched as one of college football's top linebackers after earning all-conference honors in each of the last two years. He's flanked by two other seniors in Bo Bower and Ben Niemann — both all-conference candidates in 2017.

4. VIRGINIA TECH With the Hokies losing a trio of key players in the trenches, the strength of Bud Foster's standout defense shifts to linebacker this season. A pair of 100-tackle enforcers headlines this group. Andrew Motuapuaka finished fifth in the ACC with 114 stops last year, while Tremaine Edmunds contributed 18.5 tackles for a loss and 4.5 sacks among his 106 tackles. Foster uses a hybrid safety/linebacker position as the third starter to match up better against spread offenses. Mook Reynolds is back at that position after a standout first full season as a starter in 2016.

5. WASHINGTON Injuries to Azeem Victor and Joe Mathis hindered this unit late in the year, but the Huskies have reloaded and are poised to rebound in 2017. Victor recorded 67 stops in 10 games last season and is the leader of a unit that led the Pac-12 in scoring defense in 2016. Senior Keishawn Bierria has been a steady running mate for Victor over the last two seasons and is expected to push for first-team All-Pac-12 honors. The development of Connor O'Brien and freshman Amandre Williams off the edge is critical to replace Mathis' and Psalm Wooching's 11 combined sacks last year.

6. Ohio State 7. TCU 8. USC 9. Wisconsin 10. Stanford 11. Miami (Fla.) 12. BYU 13. Auburn 14. LSU 15. Florida State 16. Oklahoma 17. Clemson 18. Kentucky 19. Indiana 20. Penn State 21. Texas 22. Louisville 23. Florida 24. Arizona State 25. Michigan

Smith: Paul Abell; Fitzpatrick: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

1. ALABAMA

The Crimson Tide have to overcome the departure of standout cornerback Marlon Humphrey to the NFL, but there's no reason to expect a drop in production from a secondary that ranked in the top 10 nationally in passing efficiency defense in back-to-back years. Minkah Fitzpatrick's versatility allows Nick Saban to mix and match the personnel at cornerback and safety. With Fitzpatrick, a first-team *Athlon Sports* preseason All-American, likely to end up at safety, Anthony Averett, Tony Brown and converted receiver Trevon Diggs are slated to round out the top trio at cornerback. Fitzpatrick will be joined by standout Ronnie Harrison at the other safety spot.

2. FLORIDA STATE The return of safety Derwin James to full strength after a season-ending knee injury in Week 2 is a huge boost for a Florida State secondary that showed marked improvement over the second half of 2016. In addition to his duties at safety, James is an all-around playmaker on defense for coordinator Charles Kelly. Trey Marshall is expected to flank James at the other safety spot, with converted receiver Ermon Lane and A.J. Westbrook providing depth. Cornerback Tarvarus McFadden had a breakout year in his first season as a starter, sharing the nation's lead with eight interceptions. Sophomore Kyle Meyers is the frontrunner to replace Marquez White at the other corner spot, but sophomores Levonta Taylor and Carlos Becker and freshman Stanford Samuels are also in the mix.

3. STANFORD Developing a standout secondary in the offensive-minded Pac-12 isn't easy. But coach David Shaw and coordinator Lance Anderson have assembled an athletic and versatile group to combat opposing passing attacks. Quenton Meeks and Alijah Holder form one of the nation's top cornerback duos, while safety Justin Reid is due for a breakout year after registering 57 stops and seven pass breakups last season. Brandon Simmons is the frontrunner to replace Dallas Lloyd at free safety. Stanford finished 25th nationally in passing efficiency defense in 2016.

4. GEORGIA The combination of four returning starters and the addition of two top-100 recruits should propel Georgia's secondary to a place among the nation's best. Three-year starter Dominick Sanders is a ball hawk at free safety with 12 career interceptions. He's joined by fellow senior Aaron Davis on the strong side, but true freshman Richard LeCounte III will be tough to keep on the bench. The cornerback duo of Malkom Parrish and Deandre Baker was a reliable one for the Bulldogs last year.

5. VIRGINIA TECH The Hokies finished fifth nationally by limiting opposing passing offenses to a completion percentage of just 50.1 last season. This unit could be even better in 2017 with four returning starters. Cornerbacks Brandon Facyson and Greg Stroman are expected to challenge for All-America honors after combining for 21 pass breakups last season. Adonis Alexander works as the No. 3 corner but could start for most Power 5 teams. Terrell Edmunds (four interceptions) is a playmaker at safety, with sophomore Reggie Floyd the lone newcomer.

6. Florida 7. LSU 8. Ohio State 9. Auburn 10. Clemson 11. Wisconsin 12. Nebraska 13. Oklahoma 14. Washington 15. Louisville 16. Northwestern 17. TCU 18. Kansas State 19. Texas 20. UCLA 21. Appalachian State 22. Indiana 23. Penn State 24. USC 25. Kentucky

TOP DB UNITS

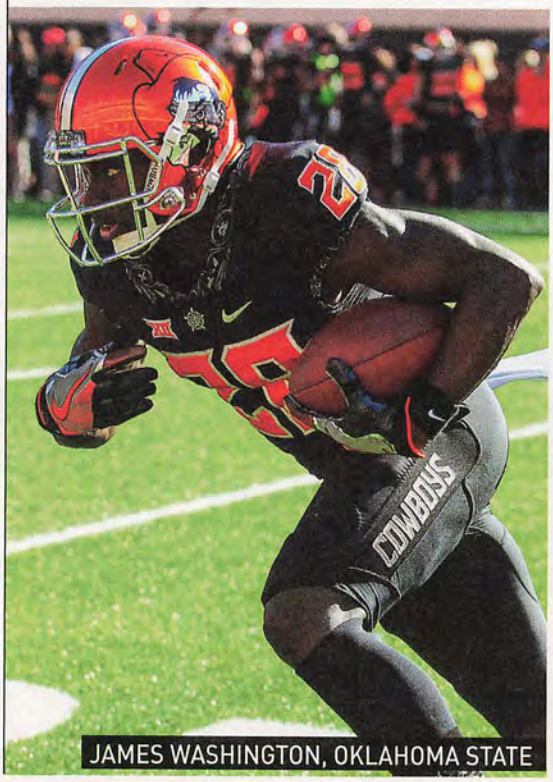


MINKAH FITZPATRICK

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ATHLON SPORTS 2017 PRESEASON ALL-AMERICA TEAM


DERRIUS GUICE , LSU


JAMES WASHINGTON, OKLAHOMA STATE

FIRST TEAM

OFFENSE

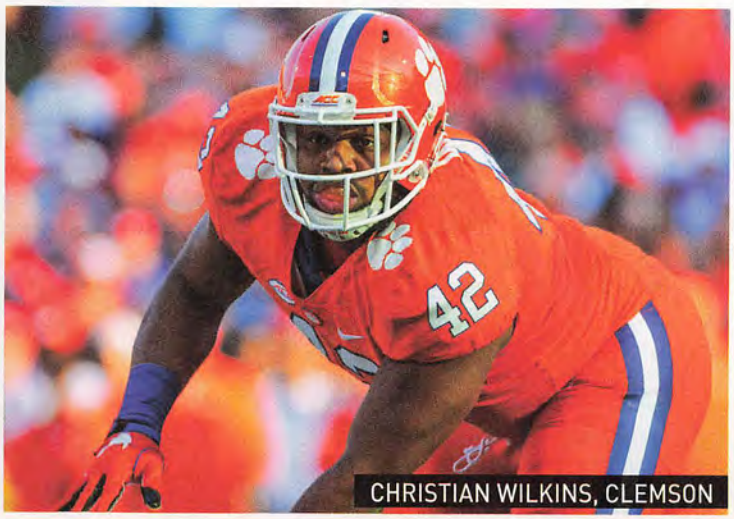
QB	Baker Mayfield	6-1	218	Sr.	Oklahoma
RB	Saquon Barkley	5-11	223	Jr.	Penn State
RB	Derrius Guice	5-11	212	Jr.	LSU
AP	Jaylen Samuels	5-11	223	Sr.	NC State
WR	Christian Kirk	5-11	200	Jr.	Texas A&M
WR	James Washington	6-0	205	Sr.	Oklahoma State
TE	Troy Fumagalli	6-6	249	Sr.	Wisconsin
C	Frank Ragnow	6-5	319	Sr.	Arkansas
OL	Orlando Brown	6-8	360	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Cody O'Connell	6-8	370	Sr.	Washington State
OL	Braden Smith	6-6	305	Sr.	Auburn
OL	Connor Williams	6-6	320	Jr.	Texas

DEFENSE

DL	Harold Landry	6-3	250	Sr.	Boston College
DL	Dexter Lawrence	6-5	340	So.	Clemson
DL	Ed Oliver	6-2	290	So.	Houston
DL	Christian Wilkins	6-4	310	Jr.	Clemson
LB	Arden Key	6-6	238	Jr.	LSU
LB	Josey Jewell	6-2	236	Sr.	Iowa
LB	Azeem Victor	6-3	222	Sr.	Washington
CB	Jaire Alexander	5-11	192	Jr.	Louisville
CB	Tarvarus McFadden	6-2	198	Jr.	Florida State
S	Minkah Fitzpatrick	6-1	201	Jr.	Alabama
S	Derwin James	6-3	211	So.	Florida State

SPECIALISTS

K	Daniel Carlson	6-4	218	Sr.	Auburn
P	Mitch Wishnowsky	6-2	220	Jr.	Utah
KR	Evan Berry	5-11	207	Sr.	Tennessee
PR	Christian Kirk	5-11	200	Jr.	Texas A&M


CHRISTIAN WILKINS, CLEMSON

Guice: Steve Franz/LSU Athletics, Washington: Tim Umphrey; Wilkins, Ridley, Chubb: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Henderson, Baker: Bruce Schwartzman

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SECOND TEAM

OFFENSE

QB	Sam Darnold	6-4	225	So.	USC
RB	Royce Freeman	5-11	231	Sr.	Oregon
RB	Kamryn Pettway	6-0	237	Jr.	Auburn
AP	Richie James	5-9	178	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
WR	Calvin Ridley	6-1	190	Jr.	Alabama
WR	Courtland Sutton	6-4	218	Jr.	SMU
TE	Mike Gesicki	6-6	252	Sr.	Penn State
C	Billy Price	6-4	312	Sr.	Ohio State
OL	Mitch Hyatt	6-5	295	Jr.	Clemson
OL	Mike McGlinchey	6-8	312	Sr.	Notre Dame
OL	Quenton Nelson	6-5	329	Sr.	Notre Dame
OL	Jonah Williams	6-5	301	So.	Alabama

DEFENSE

DL	Bradley Chubb	6-4	275	Sr.	NC State
DL	Maurice Hurst	6-2	282	Sr.	Michigan
DL	Tyquan Lewis	6-4	265	Sr.	Ohio State
DL	Vita Vea	6-5	344	Jr.	Washington
LB	Micah Kiser	6-2	240	Sr.	Virginia
LB	Tegray Scales	6-0	230	Sr.	Indiana
LB	Cameron Smith	6-2	245	Jr.	USC
CB	Duke Dawson	5-10	208	Sr.	Florida
CB	Greg Stroman	6-0	180	Sr.	Virginia Tech
S	Quin Blanding	6-2	215	Sr.	Virginia
S	Godwin Igwebuike	6-0	205	Sr.	Northwestern

SPECIALISTS

K	Eddy Pineiro	6-0	173	So.	Florida
P	J.K. Scott	6-6	204	Sr.	Alabama
KR	Rashaad Penny	5-11	220	Sr.	San Diego State
PR	Dante Pettis	6-1	192	Sr.	Washington

THIRD TEAM

OFFENSE

QB	Lamar Jackson	6-3	200	Jr.	Louisville
RB	Nick Chubb	5-10	228	Sr.	Georgia
RB	Justin Jackson	5-11	193	Sr.	Northwestern
AP	Quadree Henderson	5-8	190	Jr.	Pittsburgh
WR	Allen Lazard	6-5	223	Sr.	Iowa State
WR	Dante Pettis	6-1	192	Sr.	Washington
TE	Adam Breneman	6-4	250	Sr.	UMass
C	Mason Cole	6-5	305	Sr.	Michigan
OL	Trey Adams	6-8	320	Jr.	Washington
OL	Will Hernandez	6-3	330	Sr.	UTEP
OL	Brian O'Neill	6-6	300	Jr.	Pittsburgh
OL	Sean Welsh	6-3	295	Sr.	Iowa

DEFENSE

DL	Dorance Armstrong Jr.	6-4	246	Jr.	Kansas
DL	Marquis Haynes	6-3	225	Sr.	Ole Miss
DL	Da'Ron Payne	6-2	308	Jr.	Alabama
DL	Trent Thompson	6-4	295	Jr.	Georgia
LB	Jerome Baker	6-1	225	Jr.	Ohio State
LB	Tremaine Edmunds	6-5	236	Jr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Jordan Jones	6-2	221	Jr.	Kentucky
CB	Quenton Meeks	6-2	204	Jr.	Stanford
CB	Jordan Thomas	6-0	186	Sr.	Oklahoma
S	Marcus Allen	6-2	202	Sr.	Penn State
S	Ronnie Harrison	6-3	214	Jr.	Alabama

SPECIALISTS

K	Gary Wunderlich	6-0	193	Sr.	Ole Miss
P	Michael Dickson	6-3	205	Jr.	Texas
KR	Byron Pringle	6-2	205	Jr.	Kansas State
PR	KaVontae Turpin	5-9	153	Jr.	TCU


CALVIN RIDLEY, ALABAMA



BRADLEY CHUBB, NC STATE


QUADREE HENDERSON, PITTSBURGH


JEROME BAKER, OHIO STATE



COACHING CAROUSEL

A total of 21 FBS jobs changed hands during a busy offseason for the coaching carousel. Some of these schools – Texas, LSU – will expect immediate results, while others, like Georgia State and FIU, will give their new bosses some time to build their programs. Here's how Athlon Sports ranks the new hires.

BY: STEVEN LASSAN

1. TOM HERMAN, TEXAS

Previous Job: Houston Head Coach
Career Record: 22-4 (Houston, 2015-16)

Texas has slipped from the ranks of a national power in recent years, but the program found the right coach to get it back on track. Herman arrives in Austin after compiling a 22–4 record in two years at Houston. The Cougars went 13–1, claimed the American Athletic Conference title and earned a Peach Bowl trip in Herman's first year. Injuries derailed Houston's hopes of another AAC title in 2016, but the Cougars still finished 9–3 with victories over Power 5 opponents Louisville and Oklahoma. The successful stint at Houston was just another step in Herman's fast rise through the coaching ranks. The California native has several ties to the state of Texas from stops as an assistant at Texas Lutheran, Sam Houston State, Texas State and Rice. Herman also worked as Iowa State's offensive coordinator for three years (2009-11) and called the plays for Ohio State from 2012-14. Additionally, Herman was hired as a graduate assistant under Mack Brown at Texas from 1999-2000. While Texas has recorded three consecutive losing seasons, Herman isn't stepping into a complete rebuilding job. He has the right demeanor to handle the off-field responsibilities at Texas — including forming relationships with the state's high school coaches — and he runs a style that meshes well with many of the state's prospects. The Longhorns have a wealth of promising young talent and return 17 starters for 2017. Herman is the right hire at the right time for Texas. He will win big in Austin.

Final Grade: A+

2. P.J. FLECK, MINNESOTA

Previous Job: Western Michigan Head Coach • Career Record: 30-22 (Western Michigan, 2013-16)

After a successful four-year stint at Western Michigan, Fleck is taking his "Row the Boat" mantra to the Big Ten. Under Fleck's direction, the Broncos reached new heights in 2016. Western Michigan finished 13–1, No. 15 in the final Associated Press poll and earned the program's first trip to a New Year's Six Bowl (Cotton). The 2016 season was the culmination of a relatively swift rebuild in Kalamazoo. The Broncos went 1–11 in 2013 but finished with 8–5 records in both of the next two seasons. Fleck is regarded for his work on the recruiting trail, and the Broncos inked the MAC's best classes from 2014-16. In addition to his time at Western Michigan, Fleck worked as a graduate assistant at Ohio State (2006) under Jim Tressel, spent three years at his alma mater Northern Illinois (2007-09), worked under Greg Schiano at Rutgers (2010-11) and spent a year in the NFL with the Buccaneers (2012). The Big Ten's West Division provides an easier path to compete than the East. Fleck should increase the school's recruiting profile and has already proven that he can be the CEO of a program. The energetic 36-year-old coach is a great fit at Minnesota.

Final Grade: A

Herman: Texas Athletics; Brohm: Purdue Athletics

3. WILLIE TAGGART, OREGON

Previous Job: USF Head Coach
Career Record: 40–45 (Western Kentucky, 2010-12; USF, 2013-16)

Armed with standout facilities, backing from Nike and a young cast of talent, it shouldn't take long for Taggart to rebuild at Oregon. That's a significant change from his first two opportunities to be a head coach. At WKU, Taggart returned to his alma mater and inherited a program that was struggling to transition to the FBS level and was coming off a winless 2009 campaign. After a 2–10 mark in his debut, Taggart guided WKU to back-to-back 7–5 seasons, which included the program's first bowl bid in 2012. Taggart left for USF prior to the 2013 season, which was a natural fit for the Bradenton, Fla., native. The Bulls struggled through Taggart's first two years (6–18) but went 18–7 the next two seasons — largely due to the development of the team's up-tempo "Gulf Coast Offense." Much of Taggart's coaching experience is from WKU, but he also spent three years (2007-09) as a running backs coach at Stanford under Jim Harbaugh. Adapting to Taggart's style on offense should be a relatively seamless transition for the Ducks, and the addition of Jim Leavitt as defensive coordinator should provide an immediate spark for that side of the ball. As evidenced by his track record, Taggart is a program builder. But considering what's already in place in Eugene, it won't take long for Oregon return to national prominence.

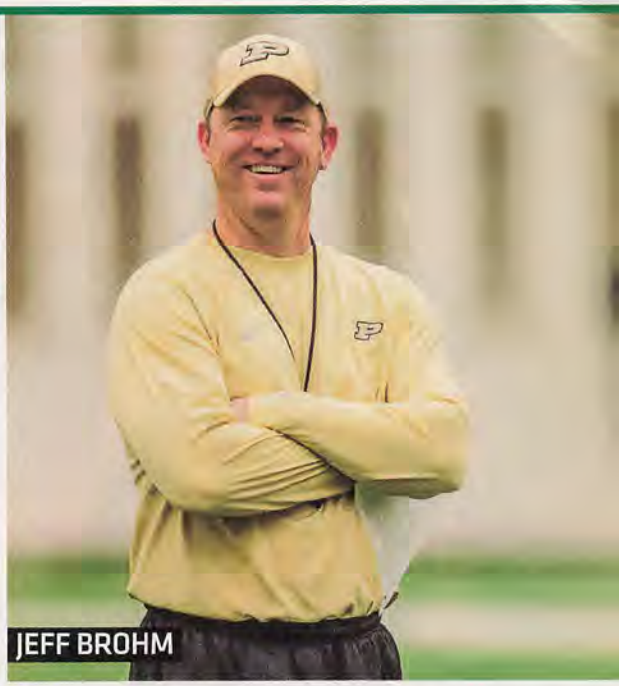
Final Grade: A-

4. JEFF BROHM, PURDUE

Previous Job: Western Kentucky Head Coach • Career Record: 30–10 (Western Kentucky, 2014-16)

Joe Tiller took Purdue to 10 bowl games in his 12 seasons (1997-2008), but the program has since slipped to the bottom of the Big Ten food chain. The Boilermakers have just two bowl trips since 2009 and only one winning record during that span. Additionally, Purdue has won a total of three Big Ten games in the last three seasons. There is, however, finally some hope — thanks to the arrival of one of the top young coaches in the country. In three years at WKU, Brohm guided the Hilltoppers to 30 wins and back-to-back Conference USA titles. Brohm is one of the nation's top offensive minds; WKU is the only team at the FBS level to average at least 40 points per game in each of the last three years. Prior to taking over as the Hilltoppers' head coach, Brohm worked under Bobby Petrino for one season at WKU (2013) and four seasons at Louisville (2003-06). He called the plays at UAB in 2012 and also had a stint at Illinois (2010-11). Purdue increased its financial commitment to make this hire and has recently announced facility improvements. That's a winning formula.

Final Grade: A-


JEFF BROHM

5. MATT RHULE, BAYLOR

Previous Job: Temple Head Coach
Career Record: 28–23 (Temple, 2013-16)

Considering that most of Rhule's experience has come on the East Coast, it's a bit of a surprise he landed at Baylor — a program trying to pick up the pieces from a major scandal. Rhule lacks natural ties to the state, but he's a proven head coach and is off to a good start after salvaging a recruiting class that featured only one commitment in early December. After a 2–10 record in his first year at Temple, Rhule guided the Owls to three consecutive non-losing seasons. Temple went 6–6 in 2014 but finished 20–7 over the last two years, including a 10–3 regular-season mark in 2016 highlighted by an American Athletic Conference title. Rhule was a linebacker at Penn State, so it's no surprise Temple ranked as one of the top teams in the AAC on defense. But he also is well versed in offense, as he spent four seasons as Temple's offensive coordinator from 2008-11 and worked for one season as an assistant offensive line coach with the Giants in '12. Attrition hit Baylor's 2016 recruiting class hard after Art Briles was dismissed, but Rhule and his staff did a great job cobbling together a respectable haul on Signing Day.

Final Grade: A-

6. CHARLIE STRONG, USF

Previous Job: Texas Head Coach
Career Record: 53–37 (Florida interim head coach, 2009; Louisville, 2010-13; Texas, 2014-16)

Strong inherits a program that is built to win big in 2017. With 16 returning starters — including dynamic quarterback Quinton Flowers — the Bulls should be one of the top Group of 5 teams in the nation in 2017. Strong's Texas tenure ended in disappointment, but the Arkansas native is returning to familiar territory. He spent more than 10 years as an assistant coach at Florida, including a stint as the team's defensive coordinator from 2003-09. Strong was hired at Louisville after the Cardinals suffered through three disappointing seasons under Steve Kragthorpe. U of L showed marked improvement in Strong's first season, finishing 7–6 in 2010, followed by another 7–6 campaign in '11 and an 11–2 mark in '12. Strong left Louisville for Texas but never put all of the pieces in place in Austin. The Longhorns did not post a winning mark in any of Strong's three seasons and declined to a 3–6 record in Big 12 play in 2016. Additionally, Strong's side of the ball — the defense — regressed over his three years in Austin. While Strong's performance in Austin can't be ignored, USF seems to be a much better fit. It will be a surprise if he doesn't enjoy success in Tampa.

Final Grade: A-

7. MIKE SANFORD, WESTERN KENTUCKY

Previous Job: Notre Dame Offensive Coordinator • Career Record: 0–0

WKU has nailed its last three coaching hires — Willie Taggart, Bobby Petrino and Jeff Brohm — and there's little reason to believe Sanford won't follow the same path as the last three coaches to roam the sidelines in Bowling Green. At 35 years old, Sanford will be the youngest head coach in FBS in 2017. Despite his youth, he has an impressive résumé that includes stops at UNLV (2005-06), Stanford (2007-08, '11-13), Yale (2009), Boise State (2014) and Notre Dame (2015-16). Sanford also worked for one year in 2010 under Willie Taggart at WKU and held the offensive coordinator tag at Notre Dame for the last two seasons. A young, up-and-coming coach with a background on offense? Sanford sure seems like a home run hire for the Hilltoppers.

Final Grade: A-



ED ORGERON

8. LANE KIFFIN, FAU

Previous Job: Alabama Offensive Coordinator • Career Record: 35–21 (Tennessee, 2009; USC, 2010-13)

Kiffin to FAU is the most polarizing hire of the 2016-17 coaching carousel. The 41-year-old arrives in Boca Raton after a successful three-year stint under Nick Saban at Alabama. Under Kiffin's direction, the Crimson Tide's offense transformed from a pro-style attack to more of a no-huddle or spread approach and ranked near the top of the SEC in all three seasons. The time in Tuscaloosa helped Kiffin rebuild his image after an early dismissal at USC and a memorable (for the wrong reasons) exit from Tennessee following the 2009 campaign. Kiffin was fired by former USC athletic director Pat Haden following the fifth game of the 2013 season, ending his tenure in Los Angeles with a 28–15 mark. NCAA sanctions hurt USC's depth and overall talent, but Kiffin was just 10–8 over his last 18 games. He went 7–6 in his only season at Tennessee, with four of those losses coming by 10 points or fewer, including a two-point defeat to eventual national champion Alabama. While Kiffin has had previous experience as a head coach and knows how to develop an offense, he also comes with plenty of baggage. Can Kiffin avoid some of the mistakes from his previous jobs? If so, FAU will be a contender in Conference USA in the near future.

Final Grade: B+

9. RANDY EDSALL, UCONN

Previous Job: Detroit Lions Director of Research – Special Projects
Career Record: 96–104 (UConn, 1999-2010; Maryland, 2011-15)

Six years after leaving UConn for Maryland, Edsall is returning to Storrs. Edsall is the winningest coach in program history after recording 74 victories from 1999-2010. He inherited a program transitioning to the FBS level in 1999 and guided the Huskies to a bowl trip in 2004 — their first year in the Big East. UConn later earned four consecutive bowl bids from 2007-10, won a share of the 2010 Big East title and played in the Fiesta Bowl that season. Edsall's tenure at Maryland got off to a rocky start with a 6–18 record through the first two years. The Terrapins showed modest improvement, winning seven games in both of the next two seasons, but he was fired after a 2–4 start to the 2015 season. While Edsall may not be the most exciting hire, he's a proven coach, has a good eye for finding talent and should provide stability for a program that won just 11 games in three years under previous coach Bob Diaco.

Final Grade: B

10. ED ORGERON, LSU

Previous Job: LSU Interim Coach
Career Record: 22–29 (Ole Miss, 2005-07; USC, 2013; LSU, 2016)

The term "dream job" is tossed around by a lot of coaches, but it's an accurate description for Orgeron at LSU. After going 10–25 at Ole Miss from 2005-07, Orgeron is getting a second chance in the SEC. Once known for his gruff and aggressive demeanor, the Louisiana native seems to have mellowed a bit since his first stint in the SEC. Orgeron replaced Lane Kiffin early in the 2013 season at USC and went 6–2 as the program's interim coach. However, he was not retained by Steve Sarkisian and spent 2014 out of football. Orgeron was hired by Les Miles at LSU in 2015 and was promoted to the top spot after Miles was fired in late September 2016. Orgeron guided the Tigers to a 6–2 record over the last eight games, with the two losses coming against the SEC's division champs — Alabama and Florida. Miles was frequently criticized for the performance of the offense. Under Orgeron's watch, things improved; the Tigers averaged 32 points during the final eight games, though there was one very costly snafu late in the loss to Florida. There's no question Orgeron knows how to recruit, but attracting talent hasn't been a problem for LSU. He will have to prove

Orgeron: LSU Athletics; Allen: Indiana University Athletics

he can win at a high level at a program that is just 19-13 in SEC play over the last four years. Trading Miles for Orgeron and new offensive coordinator Matt Canada seems like a positive step forward for LSU — but is it enough to catch Alabama?

Final Grade: B

11. TOM ALLEN, INDIANA

Previous Job: Indiana Defensive Coordinator • Career Record: 0-1 (2016 Foster Farms Bowl)

Indiana athletic director Fred Glass didn't have to look far for a replacement for Kevin Wilson. The Hoosiers parted ways with their former head coach in early December after allegations of player mistreatment surfaced. Allen was hired following the 2015 season to coordinate Indiana's defense and made a significant impact in his first year with the Hoosiers. Defense has been a weak link for Indiana in recent seasons, but Allen's group allowed 27.2 points per game — a significant decrease from the 37.6 mark in 2015. Allen is no stranger to the Hoosier State, as he's an Indiana native who earned his master's degree from IU in 2002. Allen worked under Hugh Freeze at Lambuth (2008-09), Arkansas State (2011) and Ole Miss (2012-14). He coordinated USF's defense under Willie Taggart in 2015 and helped the unit take a step forward. The 2017 season will be Allen's first as a head coach at the FBS level and his first in this role since 2006 at Ben Davis High School in Indianapolis. Allen seems to be a solid hire, but Indiana will have a tough time taking a step forward in the rugged Big Ten East.

Final Grade: B-

12. GEOFF COLLINS, TEMPLE

Previous Job: Florida Defensive Coordinator • Career Record: 0-0

Few programs have changed their outlook as much as Temple has in recent years. After enduring 18 consecutive losing seasons from 1991-2008, the Owls have played in four bowl games since 2009 and have posted only two losing marks during that span. The last three hires by this program — Al Golden, Steve Addazio and Matt Rhule — left the program for Power 5 jobs. Temple hopes to continue its upward trend with Collins taking over following Rhule's departure to Baylor. Collins has been considered a rising star in the assistant ranks over the last 10 years, with stops at UCF, FIU, Mississippi State and Florida. Collins also worked for one season in an off-field role at Alabama in 2007. In six years as a defensive coordinator in the SEC, Collins' defenses never allowed more than 25 points per game, and his 2016 unit at Florida ranked third in the SEC. In addition to his standout defenses, Collins is known for his aggressive mentality, garnering the nickname "Minister of Mayhem." He's also regarded as a good recruiter. The only concern about this hire is Collins' lack of head-coaching experience, and he's spent most of his career in the Southeast.

Final Grade: B-

13. LUKE FICKELL, CINCINNATI

Previous Job: Ohio State Defensive Coordinator • Career Record: 6-7 (Ohio State interim head coach in 2011)

Not many coaching hires in the 2016-17 cycle have a better match in geography than Cincinnati and Fickell. The state of Ohio is where Fickell has spent nearly his entire life, including a playing career at Ohio State from 1993-96, a stint as Akron's defensive line coach from 2000-01 and as a coach — in various roles — with the Buckeyes from 2002-16. He served as the Buckeyes interim head coach in 2011 after Jim Tressel resigned due to an NCAA investigation and guided the team to a 6–7 record. While he was not hired as the full-time coach, Urban Meyer retained him in a co-defensive coordinator role prior to the 2012 season. In addition to his lifetime ties to Ohio, Fickell is regarded as a good recruiter and should connect well with the state's high school coaches. Considering all of the NCAA turmoil surrounding Ohio State in 2011, it's tough to read too much into the six-win season. However, the 6–7 record was the Buckeyes' first losing mark since 1988.

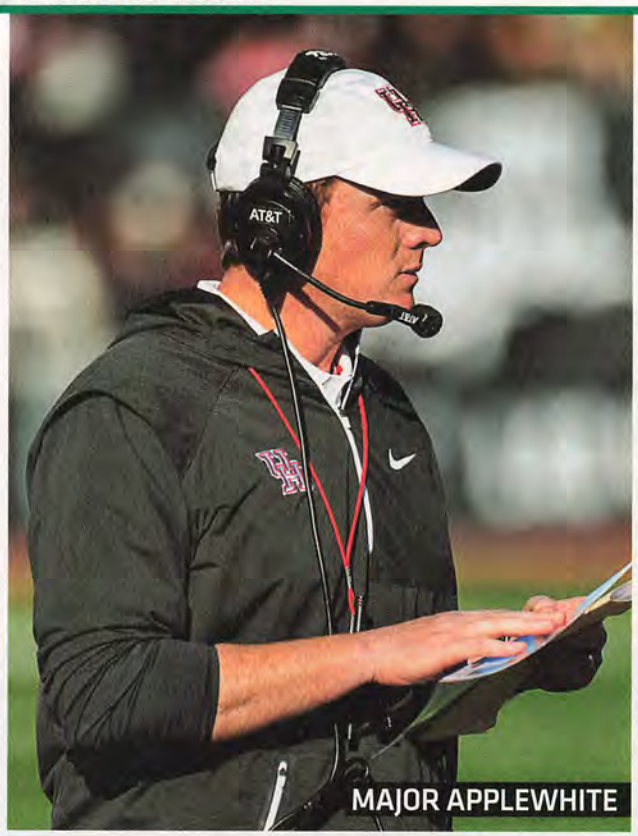
Final Grade: B-

14. BUTCH DAVIS, FIU

Previous Job: ESPN analyst
Career Record: 79-43 (Miami, 1995-2000; North Carolina, 2007-10)

It's a homecoming of sorts for Davis, as he returns to the sidelines seven years after his firing at North Carolina in 2010. The Oklahoma native has ties to the state of Florida from a stint as Miami's defensive line coach (1984-88) and again as the program's head coach from 1995-2000. Under Davis' watch, the Hurricanes overcame significant NCAA sanctions to finish 51–20, highlighted by a No. 2 ranking in 2000. Davis left Miami for the NFL prior to the 2001 season and guided the Browns for four years, recording a 24–35 mark in that span with one playoff trip. After spending two seasons out of coaching, Davis was hired as North Carolina's head coach. The Tar


TOM ALLEN


MAJOR APPLEWHITE

Heels showed steady progress in his tenure, finishing 28–23 with three consecutive bowl trips. However, Davis was fired after an investigation into academic misconduct and improper benefits with the program. Davis was never penalized by the NCAA but has not worked on the collegiate level since his departure from Chapel Hill. FIU is a program with potential, and Davis' previous success in the area and recruiting ties to the state should help the Panthers take a step forward in Conference USA.

Final Grade: B-

15. JUSTIN WILCOX, CALIFORNIA

Previous Job: Wisconsin Defensive Coordinator • Career Record: 0–0

California was the last school to make a coaching change in the 2016-17 carousel, firing Sonny Dykes in early January and replacing him with Wilcox six days later. Wilcox, an Oregon native, is no stranger to life in the Pac-12. He played at Oregon under Mike Bellotti from 1996-99 and later worked as an assistant coach at California (2003-05), Washington (2012-13) and USC (2014-15). In addition to his Pac-12 stops, Wilcox spent time at Boise State (2006-09), Tennessee (2010-11) and Wisconsin (2016). Wilcox has worked as a defensive coordinator every season since 2006, and his '16 defense at Wisconsin finished fourth nationally by limiting opponents to just 15.6 points per game. Wilcox does not have any previous head-coaching experience, but he has surrounded himself with an excellent staff, which includes former Fresno State head coach Tim DeRuyter (defensive coordinator) and former Eastern Washington head coach Beau Baldwin (offensive coordinator). California has not finished higher than eighth in the Pac-12 in scoring defense since 2011. Wilcox should help improve that side of the ball, while Baldwin's arrival will keep California near the top of the Pac-12 on offense.

Final Grade: B-

16. MAJOR APPLEWHITE, HOUSTON

Previous Job: Houston Offensive Coordinator • Career Record: 0–1 (2016 Las Vegas Bowl)

Applewhite was promoted to head coach after Tom Herman left for Texas. The Louisiana native should oversee a seamless transition from the Herman era after spending the last two years as the program's offensive coordinator. Under Applewhite's direction (with some help from Herman), Houston finished No. 10 nationally in scoring offense in 2015 and No. 26 in '16. In addition to his stint as Houston's play caller, Applewhite worked at Texas under Mack Brown from 2008-13, served as the offensive coordinator for Nick Saban at Alabama in 2007 and had one-year stops at Rice (2006) and Syracuse (2005). Applewhite's debut in the Las Vegas Bowl did not go well, as Houston suffered a 34–10 loss to San Diego State. However, it's tough to read too much into the one-game showcase. With standout defensive lineman Ed Oliver and transfer quarterback Kyle Allen leading the way, Houston will be picked near the top of the American Athletic Conference. Keep in mind, however, that expectations are very high at Houston. Going 7–5 or 8–4 at Houston isn't enough.

Final Grade: C+

17. TIM LESTER, WESTERN MICHIGAN

Previous Job: Purdue QB Coach
Career Record: 0–0

With P.J. Fleck off to Minnesota, it's up to Lester to build off that momentum and keep the Broncos near the top of the MAC. Lester is well equipped to handle this job, as he played quarterback in Kalamazoo from 1996-99 and threw for 11,299 yards and 89 touchdowns. Lester did not play in the NFL but bounced around in the XFL (2001) and Arena Football (2001-02) before going into coaching. In 2004, Lester went 7–4 as the head coach at Division II Saint Joseph's (Ind.), followed by a two-year stint as Western Michigan's quarterback coach. He later worked at North Central College for one season, spent five years as the head coach at D-III Elmhurst (Ill.) and landed back at the FBS level for stops at Syracuse (2013-15) and Purdue (2016). Lester hasn't worked as a head coach at the FBS level, but his record at Saint Joseph's and Elmhurst is a respectable 40–23. With a background on offense, familiarity with the program and a solid foundation in place, Lester should be able to keep Western Michigan relevant in the MAC.

Final Grade: C+


JUSTIN WILCOX

Applewhite: University of Houston; Brennan: Kym Fortino, San Jose State University Athletics; Wilcox: Norman Mo; Norvell: Nevada Athletics

18. JEFF TEDFORD, FRESNO STATE

Previous Job: Washington Offensive Consultant • Career Record: 82–57 (California, 2002–12)

Fresno State enjoyed a considerable amount of success under Jim Sweeney (1980-96) and Pat Hill (1997-2011), but this program slipped considerably after winning 20 games in Tim DeRuyter's first two years (2012-13). Since winning 11 games in 2013, the Bulldogs have managed only 10 victories over the last three seasons (2014-16). Considering the talent in Fresno State's recruiting territory, it won't take long for this program to return to the top of the Mountain West. And the Bulldogs have a familiar face leading the way, as Tedford returns to the Valley. The California native played at Fresno State from 1981-82 and later coached under Sweeney and Hill from 1992-97. Tedford had a four-year stint at Oregon (1998-2001) before his hire as California's head coach in 2002. During Tedford's 11-year run in Berkeley, the Golden Bears went 82–57 and earned seven consecutive bowl trips from 2003-09. However, California slipped at the end of Tedford's tenure. Since his dismissal at California, Tedford has spent time with the Tampa Bay Bucs (offensive coordinator), British Columbia Lions (head coach) and the University of Washington (offensive consultant). With deep ties to the school, Tedford appears to be a good fit for Fresno State, though it will take time to rebuild the roster.

Final Grade: C+

19. BRENT BRENNAN, SAN JOSE STATE

Previous Job: Oregon State WR Coach
Career Record: 0–0

With only three bowl appearances since 1991, it's no secret San Jose State is one of the Mountain West's toughest jobs. But the Spartans are hoping to change their fortunes with a familiar face and a coach with extensive ties to the state of California taking over the program in 2017. Brennan is a California native and grew up in Redwood City, which is less than 30 miles from San Jose. He also played at UCLA from 1991-95 and later worked as an assistant at Cal Poly and at San Jose State under Dick Tomey (2005-09) and Mike MacIntyre (2010). Brennan left the Spartans to work under Mike Riley at Oregon State from 2011-14 and remained on staff as a receivers coach under Gary Andersen from 2015-16. Brennan is regarded as an excellent recruiter who developed several standouts at receiver during his career as an assistant. The lack of head-coaching experience is the biggest concern about this hire, but Brennan seems like the right fit at San Jose State.

Final Grade: C+



BRENT BRENNAN

20. JAY NORVELL, NEVADA

Previous Job: Arizona State WR Coach • Career Record: 0–0

After a lengthy career as an assistant coach with stops in the college and NFL ranks, Norvell landed his first head-coaching opportunity at Nevada at the age of 53. Norvell has gained valuable insight from some of college football's top coaches, including Wisconsin's Barry Alvarez (1990-94), Oklahoma's Bob Stoops (2008-14) and under Iowa's Hayden Fry as a player from 1982-85 and a graduate assistant from 1986-87. While the experience is there, Norvell's results as an assistant are a mixed bag. UCLA finished 93rd nationally when he worked as the offensive coordinator in 2007; Oklahoma's offense improved following his departure in 2014; and Texas averaged just 25.3 points in Big 12 games after he took over as interim play caller in '15. Nevada does not have the same resources as some of its Mountain West counterparts but has still made 10 bowl games over the last 12 seasons. Surprisingly, Brian Polian was let go after taking Nevada to two bowl games in three years, and the division isn't getting easier with recent improvement by UNLV and Hawaii. Norvell will be expected to win right away.

Final Grade: C+


JAY NORVELL

21. SHAWN ELLIOTT, GEORGIA STATE

Previous Job: South Carolina Offensive Line Coach
Career Record: 1–5 (South Carolina interim head coach in 2015)

In just its fifth season at the FBS level, Georgia State is going through a significant transition. After sharing the Georgia Dome with the Atlanta Falcons, the Panthers will play their games in 2017 at a renovated Georgia State Stadium (formerly Turner Field). And in addition to the new home field, Georgia State has a new coach. Elliott spent the last seven years at South Carolina and previously worked at Appalachian State from 1997-2009. The South Carolina native was hired as the Gamecocks' offensive line coach in 2010 and remained in that role until '15, when he was promoted to interim head coach after Steve Spurrier's retirement. Elliott guided the Gamecocks to a 1–5 mark to finish the 2015 season, with all five losses coming by 10 points or fewer. He was retained by Will Muschamp in 2016 and continued to coach the offensive line. Elliott's offensive lines had their share of ups and downs during his tenure with the Gamecocks, but he was a solid assistant for a program that won at least nine games every year from 2010-13. He also worked under current Georgia State athletic director Charlie Cobb from 2005-09 at Appalachian State.

Final Grade: C+

EXTRA POINTS

TOP QB BATTLES

ARIZONA STATE No team was hit harder by injuries at the quarterback position than Arizona State in 2016. Coach Todd Graham was forced to utilize three different starters, and a fourth (Bryce Perkins) was lost before the season due to injury. As a result of the injuries, the Sun Devils did not average more than 30 points in Pac-12 games for the first time since 2009. Manny Wilkins started 10 games and led the team with 2,329 passing yards and 12 scores. Dillon Sterling-Cole and Brady White both made one start last season, but both struggled in their first extended action. Joining the competition is former five-star recruit Blake Barnett. He transferred from Alabama after losing the starting job last season and played in Tuscaloosa under new Sun Devils coordinator Billy Napier. Barnett has only three games of experience, but he's the most talented quarterback on the roster.
Projected Winner: Barnett

BAYLOR Baylor's high-powered offense is undergoing an offseason makeover under new coach Matt Rhule. Co-coordinators Glenn Thomas and Jeff Nixon plan to mesh up-tempo spread principles with some of the pro-style elements Rhule used at Temple. Sophomore Zach Smith got an early start on claiming the job after Seth Russell suffered a season-ending leg injury in mid-November. Smith was just 1–3 as a starter but finished 2016 with 1,526 passing yards and 13 scores. He's the frontrunner to start, with Arizona graduate transfer Anu Solomon and true freshman Charlie Brewer competing for snaps. Injuries plagued Solomon over his last two years with the Wildcats, but he accumulated 7,359 yards of total offense and 54 total scores in Tucson.
Projected Winner: Smith

CLEMSON After leading Clemson to its first national championship since 1981, Deshaun Watson leaves enormous shoes to fill. The Tigers won't be able to replicate the leadership and overall production Watson provided over the last three years, but coach Dabo Swinney has recruited this position as well as any team in the nation. Junior Kelly Bryant worked as Watson's backup over the last two seasons and completed 13-of-18 passes for 75 yards and one score. He also showcased his mobility with 178 yards on just 35 carries. But Bryant is far from locked into the starting job. Redshirt freshman Zerrick Cooper ranked as the No. 7 dual-threat quarterback in the 2016 signing class, and incoming freshman Hunter Johnson was a highly coveted five-star prospect. Johnson enrolled in time to compete in spring ball and made a late push for the starting job. Bryant may begin 2017 as the starter, but Johnson could eventually emerge as the team's best quarterback.
Projected Winner: Bryant


KELLY BRYANT

FLORIDA Considering the firepower this program possessed under former coaches Steve Spurrier and Urban Meyer, it's a surprise Florida has not finished higher than seventh in the SEC in scoring (conference games) since 2010. Jim McElwain's first two years resulted in East Division titles, but the Gators have struggled to find consistent quarterback play. Austin Appleby and Luke Del Rio struggled to connect on big plays, landing only seven passes of 40 yards or more. Appleby has used up his eligibility, and Del Rio is recovering from offseason shoulder surgery. Redshirt freshmen Feleipe Franks and Kyle Trask are the frontrunners, with true freshman Kadarius Toney emerging as a change-of-pace option. There will be growing pains, but Franks has the accuracy and arm strength to give Florida's passing game a needed boost.
Projected Winner: Franks

KENTUCKY The Wildcats earned their first bowl trip under coach Mark Stoops last season, but for this program to make another move, more consistency is needed in the passing game. Drew Barker was a key in-state pickup for Stoops and was poised to handle the full-time job after Patrick Towles transferred to Boston College last year. However, Barker suffered a back injury after the third game, forcing junior college recruit Stephen Johnson into the starting lineup. Johnson was dangerous on the ground but was inconsistent as a passer (54.7 percent). Johnson, who guided Kentucky to seven wins in 11 games, emerged as the frontrunner for the job with a strong performance in the spring.
Projected Winner: Johnson

MARYLAND Offensive coordinator Walt Bell is a rising star in the coaching ranks, but he will have his hands full this offseason. Perry Hills has departed after throwing for 1,464 yards and 12 scores last year, leaving five candidates vying for the starting job. Sophomore Tyrrell Pigrome played in 11 games last season and is the most mobile option of the bunch. However, Pigrome is still developing as a passer. Sophomore Max Bortenschlager made one start in 2016 and finished the year with 209 yards and one score on 16 completions. North Carolina transfer Caleb Henderson was rated as a four-star recruit out of high school and is eligible after sitting out 2016. Junior college transfer Ryan Brand and incoming freshman Kasim Hill round out the contenders. Henderson's passing ability should be enough to earn a slight edge on the starting job, with Hill the wild-card option.
Projected Winner: Henderson

Bryant: AP; Chryst: Peter Brouillet


KELLER CHRYST

MIAMI Brad Kaaya's steady play over the last three years won't be easy to replace. However, Mark Richt has a strong track record in developing quarterbacks, and the Hurricanes have some intriguing options. Junior Malik Rosier worked as Kaaya's backup over the last two years and made one start in 2015. The Alabama native is more mobile than Kaaya but has completed only 50.1 percent of his throws. Pushing Rosier for the job is sophomore Evan Shirreffs and true freshmen N'Kosi Perry and Cade Weldon. (Redshirt freshman Jake Allison, the only QB in the Canes' 2016 recruiting class, left the program in the spring.) Rosier could begin 2017 as the starter, but this job may change hands during the year.
Projected Winner: Rosier

MICHIGAN STATE Life after Connor Cook was difficult for the Spartans last season. The offense finished 12th in the Big Ten in averaging only 24.1 points per game and failed to eclipse more than 200 passing yards in six contests. Tyler O'Connor started nine games in 2016 and was pressed for the job by Brian Lewerke before he suffered a season-ending injury in late October. O'Connor has graduated, leaving Lewerke with a slight edge over Damion Terry and redshirt freshman Messiah deWeaver for the job. Lewerke completed 31-of-57 passes for 381 yards and two touchdowns last year. Terry's dual-threat potential could allow the Spartans to use him in a change-of-pace role.
Projected Winner: Lewerke

MINNESOTA Finding a quarterback is new coach P.J. Fleck's top priority this offseason, and the Golden Gophers have a cast of inexperienced options vying for the starting job. Former walk-on Conor Rhoda made one start in 2016 but has only 17 career pass attempts. Redshirt freshman Seth Green was rated a three-star recruit in the 2016 signing class but has yet to attempt a pass in college. Sophomore Demry Croft played in three games in 2015 but used last season as a redshirt year. Rhoda's experience gives him an early advantage until one of the young quarterbacks develops.
Projected Winner: Rhoda

NEBRASKA Tommy Armstrong had a successful four-year run as Nebraska's starter, but the two quarterbacks competing for the job this offseason — Tanner Lee and Patrick O'Brien — are a better fit for coach Mike Riley's offense. Lee was Tulane's starting quarterback in 2014-15 and threw for 3,601 yards and 23 scores. He's more of a traditional drop-back passer. O'Brien is cut from the same mold and represents the future of the program. The four-star recruit from California redshirted in his first year on campus. This battle is expected to go deep into the fall.
Projected Winner: Lee

NORTH CAROLINA Mitch Trubisky's early departure left a big void under center for coach Larry Fedora. Last year's backup Nathan Elliott opened spring as the No. 1 option, but he's attempted only nine passes in limited action. Redshirt freshmen Chazz Surratt and Logan Byrd had an extended look in the spring, but Fedora added competition in March with former LSU signal-caller Brandon Harris. The Louisiana native was rated a four-star recruit out of the high school ranks and started 15 games in three years with the Tigers. Despite throwing for 2,756 yards and 20 scores, Harris struggled to reach his potential or develop into a consistent passer. Assuming Harris quickly picks up the offense this summer, he should take the first snap in 2017.
Projected Winner: Harris

STANFORD Keller Chryst went 6-0 as Stanford's starter last season, but a knee injury in the Sun Bowl clouded the quarterback position on the Farm this offseason. Chryst faced an easier slate of defenses than previous starter Ryan Burns battled through the first seven contests, but Chryst provided a spark to the passing game. Additionally, the Cardinal averaged 37.2 points in Chryst's six games, compared to 17.0 per contest under Burns. Burns considered leaving as a graduate transfer but decided to remain with the program. Redshirt freshman K.J. Costello got an extended look in the spring, and five-star recruit Davis Mills arrives this summer. Chryst is expected to regain the starting job if he's 100 percent healthy by the fall.
Projected Winner: Chryst

TENNESSEE Joshua Dobbs' prolific career is over, but the Volunteers aren't hurting at quarterback. Quinten Dormady worked as the backup to Dobbs over the last two years, completing 24-of-39 throws for 357 yards and one touchdown. The junior isn't as mobile as Dobbs but is regarded as a better pocket passer. Dormady will have a tough time holding off redshirt freshman Jarrett Guarantano, who ranked as the No. 1 dual-threat quarterback in the 2016 signing class. Expect Dormady to get the start Week 1 against Georgia Tech, but Guarantano — who is the better long-term propect — figures to work his way into the lineup at some point next fall.
Projected Winner: Dormady

TEXAS A&M Uncertainty surrounds the quarterback position in College Station for the fourth consecutive offseason. Senior Jake Hubenak has three career starts and passed for 884 yards and six scores in seven appearances last year. However, Hubenak will be pushed for time by redshirt freshman Nick Starkel and true freshman Kellen Mond. Starkel was rated a three-star prospect in the 2016 class, while Mond was regarded as one of the top dual-threat quarterbacks. Hubenak and Starkel likely have a better grasp of the system, but Mond enrolled in time to compete for spring ball.
Projected Winner: Mond

VIRGINIA TECH Justin Fuente is quickly emerging as one of the nation's top quarterback coaches. He developed TCU's Andy Dalton into a second-round pick and later transformed Paxton Lynch from an unheralded two-star recruit at Memphis into a first-round NFL Draft pick. In Fuente's first year at Virginia Tech, he helped Jerod Evans go from junior college recruit to one of the ACC's top quarterbacks, and Evans decided to leave early for the NFL. Redshirt freshman Josh Jackson is the frontrunner, but Fuente added competition in the 2017 signing class. Junior college transfer (and former Nebraska Husker) A.J. Bush and true freshman Hendon Hooker arrived in time to compete in spring ball.
Projected Winner: Jackson

10 OTHERS TO WATCH
(and projected starters)

Arizona: Brandon Dawkins
Boston College: Anthony Brown
California: Chase Forrest
Illinois: Chayce Crouch
Oregon State: Jake Luton
Rutgers: Giovanni Rescigno
Temple: Logan Marchi
Tulsa: Luke Skipper
Wake Forest: Kendall Hinton
Western Michigan: Tom Flacco

CONFERENCE RANKINGS

1. SEC
For the first time in recent memory, you could make a legitimate argument last season that the SEC was not the best conference in college football. That was last year. Moving forward, the league should reclaim its spot as the unquestioned king of the sport, thanks to the continued dominance of Alabama and the expected re-emergence of Auburn and LSU in 2017. It's still too early to anoint any team from the SEC East as a legitimate threat to crack the national elite, but Georgia is recruiting at an Alabama-like level, Florida has won 19 games in two seasons under Jim McElwain, and Tennessee still has a roster stacked with talent.
Favorite: Alabama

2. ACC
Life was good in 2016 for the ACC. Consider the following: The league produced a national champion (and that champion, Clemson, shut out Ohio State and knocked off Alabama en route to the title); an ACC player won the Heisman Trophy (Louisville's Lamar Jackson); a team that finished 5–3 in league games (Pittsburgh) was good enough to beat the national champion (Clemson) as well as the champion from the Big Ten (Penn State); and ACC teams went a combined 8–3 in bowl games. That's pretty impressive stuff. Still, we aren't quite ready to crown the ACC as the No. 1 league in the nation. Florida State is a legitimate national title contender, and we have learned never to count out Clemson — no matter how many key players it loses. But there doesn't look like a top-10 team beyond the Big 2. Louisville, Miami and Virginia Tech are top-25-caliber teams, but the ACC in 2017 won't be quite as deep as it was a year ago.
Favorite: Florida State

3. BIG TEN
The rise of the Big Ten East has elevated the league's profile in recent years. Michigan State has taken a step back, but Penn State's emergence has given this division three teams — along with Ohio State and Michigan, of course — that look to be capable of making the College Football Playoff in any given season. The West has been a punchline in recent years, but Wisconsin has proven it has staying power under Paul Chryst, and two schools in the division made tremendous hires in the offseason — Purdue (Jeff Brohm) and Minnesota (P.J. Fleck). It's the bottom half of the league — which contains too many bad teams — that prevents the Big Ten from challenging the SEC and ACC for conference supremacy.
Favorite: Ohio State


SEC CHAMPION ALABAMA

4. PAC-12
There are two teams with legitimate CFB Playoff aspirations — Washington and USC. Beyond that, the Pac-12 is loaded with good but hardly great teams. Stanford is Stanford (and that's a compliment); Oregon should be much improved under Willie Taggart but is far from elite; UCLA has plenty of talent but can't be trusted; Utah lost a lot of talent but can always be trusted; Colorado is eager to prove it wasn't a one-hit wonder; and Washington State is fun to watch but can't be considered a threat to win the league.
Favorite: Washington

5. BIG 12
No Power 5 league has slipped further in its standing in recent years than the Big 12. Oklahoma has remained relevant on the national scene, but it's hard to find another program that is considered elite at this point. Oklahoma State has been a consistent winner but has been in the national title conversation only once during its recent run of success. The Big 12's biggest issue: Texas. It's tough to see the league making a move up the college football food chain until the Horns re-emerge as a national power.
Favorite: Oklahoma

6. AMERICAN
It was a difficult offseason for the AAC, which lost three of its top coaches to Power 5 schools — Matt Rhule (Temple to Baylor), Tom Herman (Houston to Texas) and Willie Taggart (USF to Oregon). This is still a really good "mid-major" league with some quality teams, but we can stop the talk of the AAC forcing the college football world to change Power 5 to Power 6.
Favorite: USF

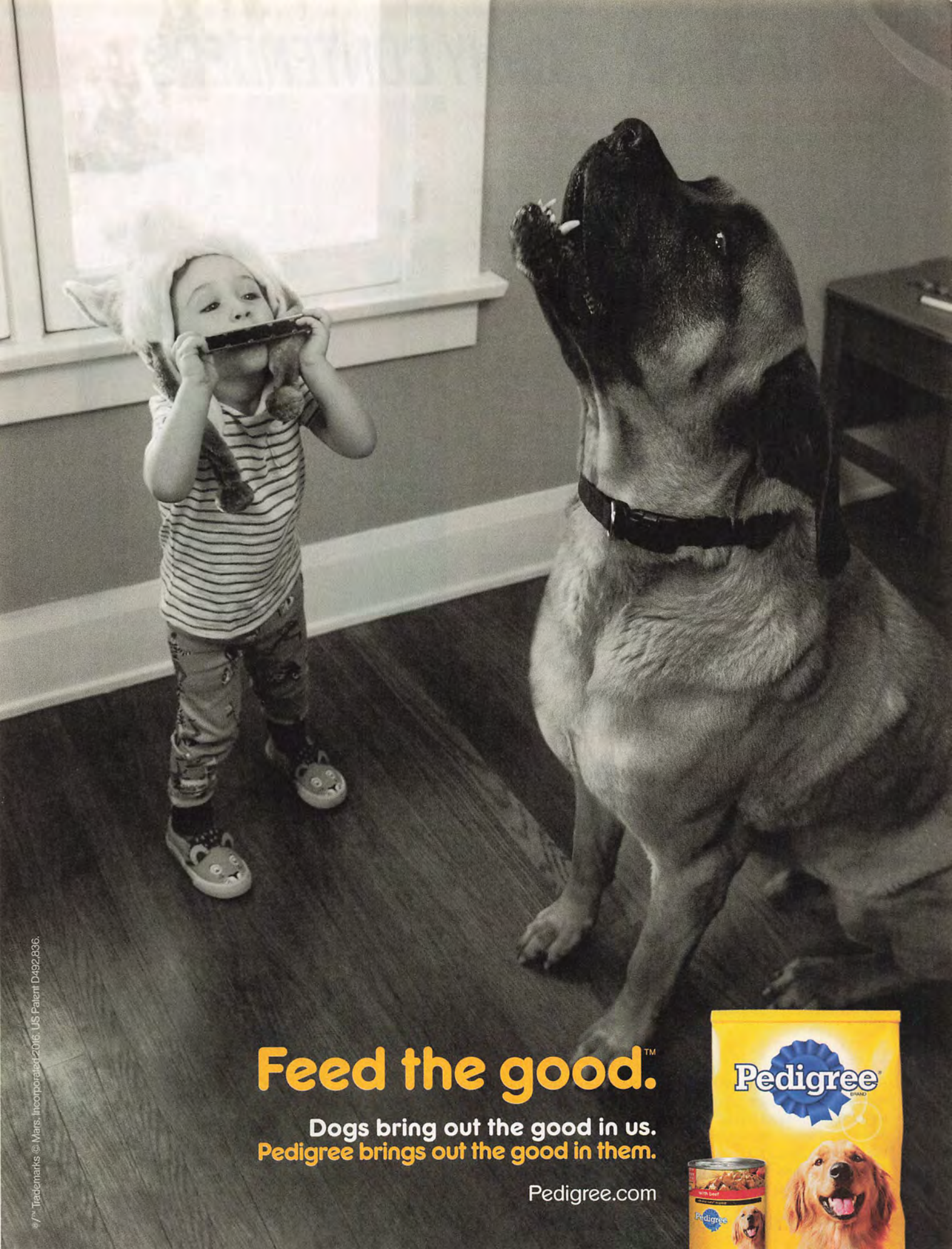
7. MOUNTAIN WEST
Four teams went 6–2 in the Mountain West last season, and all four teams had a really bad non-conference loss on their résumés. Boise State dropped a 31–12 decision in the Cactus Bowl to a Baylor team that had lost its previous six games; San Diego State and New Mexico lost to teams that went 2–6 in the Sun Belt (South Alabama and New Mexico State, respectively); and Wyoming lost to Eastern Michigan. Not a good look.
Favorite: Boise State

8. CONFERENCE USA
The bottom of this league continues to be a mess, but there are some really solid programs at the top, most notably Louisiana Tech, Western Kentucky and Middle Tennessee. Keep an eye on UTSA. The Roadrunners surprised a year ago, and Frank Wilson continues to upgrade the talent.
Favorite: Louisiana Tech

9. MAC
The MAC's biggest problem is a lack of balance between the two divisions. You could make an argument that the fifth-place team in the West last year (Central Michigan) was better than the East champion (Ohio). (That argument is made more compelling by the fact that CMU beat Ohio, 27–20.)
Favorite: Toledo

10. SUN BELT
Appalachian State and Arkansas State, who are both 20–4 in league games in the last three seasons, continue to rule the Sun Belt conference. The league welcomes Coastal Carolina from the FCS ranks this fall. Don't be surprised if the Chanticleers become a factor in the next few years.
Favorite: Appalachian State

Alabama: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports;



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HEISMAN TROPHY CONTENDERS

1. BAKER MAYFIELD, QB, OKLAHOMA
Mayfield's amazing numbers from the 2016 season — 3,965 passing yards, a 70.9 percent completion rate, a 40-to-8 touchdown-to-interception ratio, 11.1 yards per passing attempt — put him at the top of the Heisman heap heading into 2017. He could end his career as one of college football's all-time greats.

2. SAM DARNOLD, QB, USC
Darnold's Rose Bowl performance as a redshirt freshman — 453 passing yards and five TDs in a thrilling win over Penn State — set the college football world abuzz and vaulted him to the top of many preseason Heisman lists. And he wasn't a one-game wonder; Darnold was great from the time he took the reins for the Trojans in late September.

3. LAMAR JACKSON, QB, LOUISVILLE
The reigning Heisman winner is almost an afterthought entering the 2017 season following a struggling finish to 2016, but he remains college football's pre-eminent dual threat at the position after averaging 272.5 passing yards and 120.9 rushing yards per game in Bobby Petrino's high-octane attack.

4. SAQUON BARKLEY, RB, PENN STATE
He might end up splitting votes with fellow honors candidate Trace McSorley, the Lions' quarterback, but Barkley will take a back seat to no one following a season that produced 1,898 yards from scrimmage and 22 total touchdowns.

5. J.T. BARRETT, QB, OHIO STATE
It seems like Barrett has been a Buckeye since the days of Archie Griffin. He returns for the final chapter of his storied OSU career looking to forge a legacy that could include more Heisman hardware for the Buckeye trophy case.

6. DERRIUS GUICE, RB, LSU
Leonard Fournette got the preseason hype, but Guice was the Tigers' top back in 2016. In his last four games, he averaged 189.5 rushing yards with nine total TDs, finishing the season with 1,387 rushing yards. The LSU offense will revolve around Guice in 2017.

7. JAKE BROWNING, QB, WASHINGTON
Browning led the Huskies to the College Football Playoff as a sophomore, throwing for 3,430 yards and 43 touchdowns with only nine interceptions. Washington might take a small step back, but another season of playoff contention would make Browning hard to ignore come Heisman time.

8. JARRETT STIDHAM, QB, AUBURN
The Baylor transfer immediately transforms the Tigers into SEC West contenders. If he lives up to the hype — which, admittedly, is a big if — he could work his way into Heisman contention.

9. MASON RUDOLPH, QB, OKLAHOMA STATE
In a season with a seemingly bottomless well of QB talent, Rudolph is as good as anyone in the nation. As a junior, the South Carolina native threw for 4,091 yards with 28 touchdowns and only four interceptions for the 10-win Cowboys.

10. BO SCARBROUGH, RB, ALABAMA
Scarbrough, who started only two games, was at his best late in the season when he rushed for a combined 444 yards and six touchdowns on 63 carries (7.2 per rush) against Auburn, Florida, Washington and Clemson. The key: staying healthy — something he was unable to do during his sophomore season.

11. NICK CHUBB, RB, GEORGIA
Chubb's junior season got off to a great start when he rushed for 222 yards on 32 carries in the Bulldogs' win over North Carolina. He topped 100 yards only four times in the remaining 12 games. Another cause for concern: He averaged only 5.0 yards per carry, down from 7.1 as a freshman and 8.1 during an injury-shortened sophomore season.

12. LUKE FALK, QB, WASHINGTON STATE
Falk was brilliant as a junior, ranking second in the nation in completion percentage (70.0) while averaging 343.7 passing yards per game. If Washington State contends in the Pac-12 North, Falk could climb into serious Heisman contention.

13. JOSH ROSEN, QB, UCLA
Rosen is one of the most talented quarterbacks in the nation, but he has yet to become as a star in college — due to inconsistency as a freshman and injury as a sophomore. He could put it all together in what figures to be his final season in college.


BAKER MAYFIELD

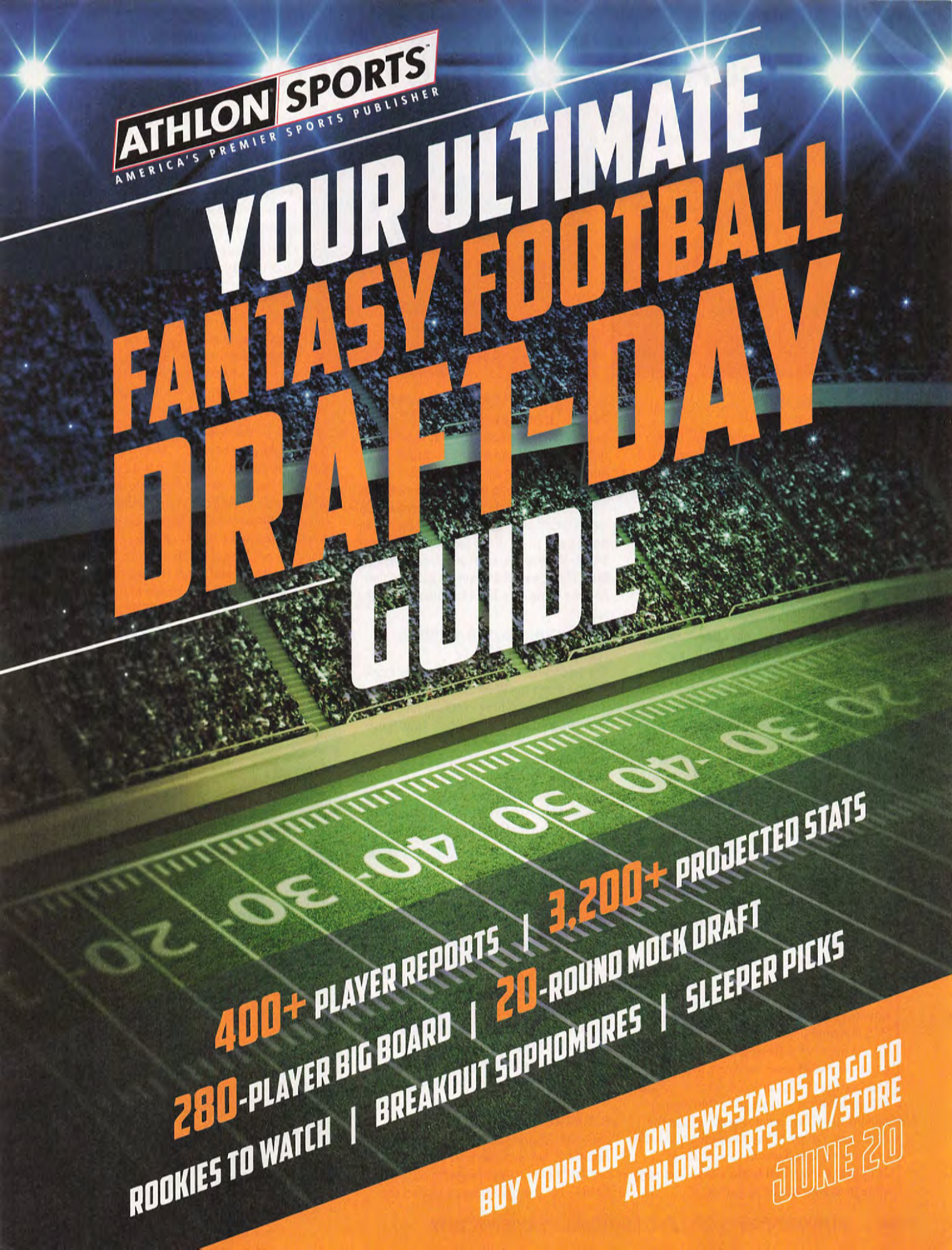
14. DEONDRE FRANCOIS, QB FLORIDA STATE
Francois could emerge as one of the nation's top players as a sophomore on a team that should compete for a national title. After completing a combined 45.3 percent of his attempts against Louisville, Clemson, Florida and Michigan, he'll need to be more efficient against top competition.

15. TRACE McSORLEY, QB PENN STATE
The lightly recruited McSorley — who was originally committed to play for James Franklin at Vanderbilt — was one of the biggest surprises in college football in 2016. He threw for 300-plus yards five times and led the Big Ten with 9.3 yards per passing attempt.

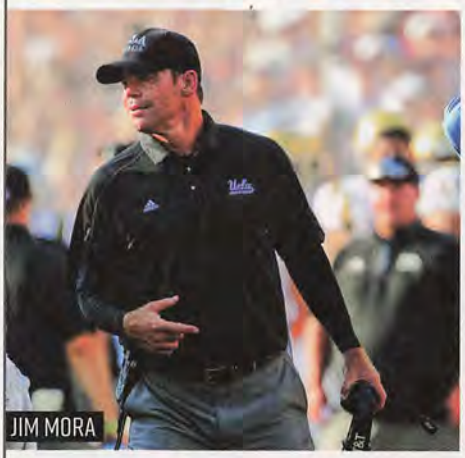
10 OTHERS TO WATCH

16. Quinton Flowers, QB, South Florida
17. Kamryn Pettway, RB, Auburn
18. Jalen Hurts, QB, Alabama
19. Royce Freeman, RB, Oregon
20. James Washington, WR, Oklahoma State
21. Rawleigh Williams III, RB, Arkansas
22. Justin Jackson, RB, Northwestern
23. Nick Fitzgerald, QB, Mississippi State
24. Myles Gaskin, RB, Washington
25. Ed Oliver, DT, Houston

Mayfield: Chris Covatta


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COACHES ON THE HOT SEAT


JIM MORA


KEVIN SUMLIN

1. JIM MORA, UCLA
(41-24, five seasons)
The Bruins went 29–11 overall and 18–9 in the Pac-12 in Mora's first three seasons but have slumped to 12–13 overall and 7–11 in the league in the last two. Injuries played a part in last year's four-win campaign, but there is a strong feeling — both among UCLA fans and around college football — that this program continues to underachieve.

2. KLIFF KINGSBURY, TEXAS TECH
(24-26, four seasons)
Kingsbury has yet to record a winning record in the Big 12 or finish higher than a tie for fifth in the league standings in his four seasons at his alma mater. And here's the most damaging stat: Texas Tech has had a losing overall record twice in his four seasons after having a losing record only once in the previous 20 years. Kingsbury is beloved in Lubbock, but the Red Raiders desperately need to reach a bowl game (at least) in 2017.

3. PAUL HAYNES, KENT STATE
(12-35, four seasons)
Expectations are not high at Kent State, which has enjoyed only three winning seasons since 1977. But Haynes, defensive back for the Golden Flashes from 1987-91, must show some progress this fall after winning a total of eight league games in four seasons.

4. BRIAN KELLY, NOTRE DAME
(59-31, seven seasons)
Kelly is an interesting case. On the positive side: He's won eight games or more six times in seven seasons and reached the BCS National Championship Game in 2012. On the negative side: He's lost at least four games in five of seven seasons, including eight last year. In addition, his act — for lack of a better term — is wearing thin among most Notre Dame supporters. Despite the negativity, Kelly will have a great opportunity to coach his way back into good graces in 2017 with a team that is more than talented enough to win nine or 10 games.

5. KEVIN SUMLIN, TEXAS A&M
(44-21, five seasons)
Sumlin made a quick splash in Year 1, guiding the Aggies to an overall record of 11–2 and a 6–2 mark in the SEC in 2012 — the school's first year in the league. Since then, there's been a whole lot of mediocrity in College Station. Over the last four seasons, the Aggies are 15–17 in the SEC with finishes of fourth place twice, sixth once and a tie for fifth. The school didn't spend $450 million on renovating Kyle Field to finish .500 in the league.

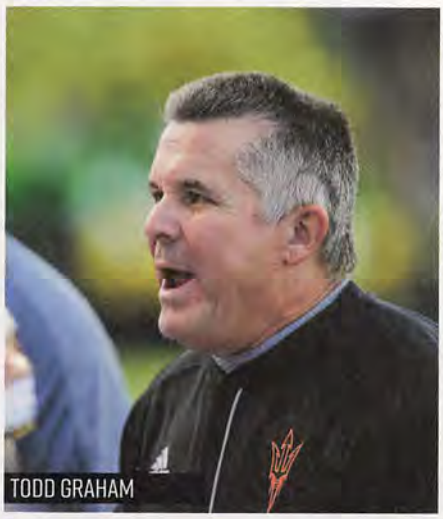
6. RICH RODRIGUEZ, ARIZONA
(36-29, five seasons)
The Rodriguez era hit its high-water mark in 2014 when the Wildcats won 10 games (for only the third time in school history) and captured the Pac-12 South title. Since, however, the program has regressed, finishing fifth in the division in 2015 (3–6) and last in 2016 (1–8). Rodriguez will have a new boss in the fall as well; Greg Byrne, who hired him in 2012, is now at Alabama and has been replaced by Dave Heeke.

7. TODD GRAHAM, ARIZONA STATE
(39-26, five seasons)
Graham earned the (deserved) reputation as a job hopper after coaching at three schools from 2006-11, but he's embarking on his sixth season at Arizona State. His first three years were very good: two 10-win seasons and a combined mark of 19–8 in the Pac-12. Like his colleague in Tucson, Rich Rodriguez, Graham has struggled in the past two years. The Sun Devils slumped to 2–7 in the league last year and ended the season with a disheartening 56–35 loss to rival Arizona — which had been winless in the Pac-12.

8. DAVID BAILIFF, RICE
(56-69, 10 seasons)
Bailiff has enjoyed a nice run at Rice — highlighted by 10-win seasons in 2008 and 2013 — but the Owls have struggled the last two years. In 2016, they lost their first eight games against FBS competition before beating Charlotte and UTEP in November. In 10 seasons, Bailiff's teams have had a winning record in C-USA games only three times.

9. SEAN KUGLER, UTEP
(18-31, four seasons)
The Miners have had a losing record in C-USA in three of Kugler's four seasons, including a 2–6 mark in 2016. Here's an interesting note that has nothing to do with Kugler's job security: His position coach during his playing days as an offensive lineman at UTEP was Andy Reid, current head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs.

10. ROD CAREY, NORTHERN ILLINOIS
(36-19, four seasons)
Carey has guided the Huskies to a 26–6 record in the MAC in four seasons, but the program is trending in the wrong direction. In 2016, NIU went 5–3 in the league (its worst record since 2009) and had an overall losing record for the first time since 2008. Also, NIU lost to MAC West rivals Central Michigan and Western Michigan in the same season for the first time since 2008 and also lost at home to FCS foe Western Illinois.


TODD GRAHAM

10 MORE GETTING WARMER

Steve Addazio, Boston College
Bret Bielema, Arkansas
Dave Doeren, NC State
Hugh Freeze, Ole Miss
Doc Holliday, Marshall
Mike Jinks, Bowling Green
Butch Jones, Tennessee
Mike Riley, Nebraska
Tyson Summers, Georgia Southern
Matt Wells, Utah State

Mora: Chris Covatta; Sumlin: Paul Abell; Graham: Craig Mitchelldyer; Riley: Jackson Laizure/Getty Images; Fritz: Alex Menendez/Getty Images

COACHES ON THE RISE

1. LINCOLN RILEY
Offensive Coordinator, Oklahoma

Riley has quite an impressive résumé for a 33-year-old who played one season of college football as a walk-on. He became a position coach at a Power 5 school (Texas Tech) at the age of 23 and an offensive coordinator (at East Carolina) at the age of 26. In his two years at Oklahoma, the Sooners have ranked seventh (2015) and second (2016) in total offense and 13th ('15) and second ('16) in yards per play. Last year, OU produced two Heisman finalists (quarterback Baker Mayfield and wide receiver Dede Westbrook) and had two other players (Joe Mixon and Samaje Perine) rush for 1,000-plus yards. He will be a head coach in the very near future.

2. DAVE ARANDA
Defensive Coordinator, LSU

Few coordinators have enjoyed as much success as Aranda in recent seasons. Consider the following: Last year, LSU ranked 10th in the nation in total defense, and that was the worst ranking for an Aranda-coached defense in his four seasons as a coordinator at a Power 5 school. In Aranda's three years at Wisconsin, the Badgers ranked second, fourth and seventh nationally in total defense and never allowed more than 5.0 yards per play in a season. He was the defensive coordinator at Utah State in 2012; if Matt Wells has another down year (or two), don't be surprised if Aranda is the next head coach in Logan.

3. JOE MOORHEAD
Offensive Coordinator, Penn State

Moorhead was arguably the most impactful coordinator hire in college football last season. From 2015 to '16, the Nittany Lions improved in total offense by 84.0 yards per game, 1.0 yards per play and, most importantly, 14.4 points per game. With quarterback Trace McSorley — a three-star recruit who was headed to Vanderbilt before James Franklin took the Penn State job — and running back Saquon Barkley leading the way, the Lions averaged 45.6 points over their final seven games. A former head coach at Fordham (38–13 in four seasons), Moorhead was reportedly targeted by several schools this past offseason but chose to stay at Penn State — for at least one more season.

4. SCOTT SATTERFIELD
Head Coach, Appalachian State

The Mountaineers have made a remarkably smooth transition from the FCS to FBS ranks under Satterfield's watch. After going 4–8 overall and 4–4 in the Southern Conference in 2013 — the school's final season in FCS — Appalachian State is 28–10 overall and 20–4 in the Sun Belt from '14-16. The Mountaineers opened the 2016 season with an overtime loss at Tennessee and then proceeded to win 10 of their final 12 games, capped off with a 31–28 victory over Toledo in the Camellia Bowl. App State has led the Sun Belt in total offense each of the past two seasons en route to compiling a 14–2 league mark in that span.

5. NEAL BROWN
Head Coach, Troy

Brown has engineered a quick turnaround in his two years at Troy, guiding the Trojans to a 10–3 record in 2016 after winning only four games in 2015. Troy's finest moment last year might have come in one of its three losses, a 30–24 setback in Week 2 at Clemson, the eventual national champion. Brown, who played for Hal Mumme at Kentucky from 1998-2000, was an offensive coordinator at Troy (2008-09), Texas Tech (2010-12) and Kentucky (2013-14) before landing his first head coaching job at the age of 35.

6. PHILIP MONTGOMERY
Head Coach, Tulsa

Montgomery has restored order at Tulsa after the Golden Hurricane struggled mightily in the final years of the Bill Blankenship era. After winning six games in Year 1, Montgomery guided TU to a 10–3 record that included losses to Ohio State, Houston and Navy, three teams that won a combined 29 games. Tulsa led the American Athletic Conference in total offense with 527.0 yards per game and played at a lightning-fast pace; the Hurricane averaged 85.7 offensive snaps per game, third most in the nation. The only knock on Montgomery's otherwise impressive résumé: He spent 12 years working for Art Briles, including seven at Baylor (2008-14). That might prevent some Power 5 schools from taking a closer look.

7. MIKE NORVELL
Head Coach, Memphis

Norvell inherited a good situation from Virginia Tech-bound Justin Fuente, but he proved that he knew how to run a program in his first season as a head coach. The Tigers, who had to replace a first-round pick at quarterback (Paxton Lynch), went 8–5 overall, highlighted by wins over eventual AAC champ Temple and Houston. Norvell is doing a great job on the recruiting trail as well; Memphis' last two recruiting classes have been ranked second (2017) and third (2016) in the AAC.

8. CRAIG BOHL
Head Coach, Wyoming

Bohl won big at FCS power North Dakota State — including national titles in his final three seasons — and appears to have Wyoming on the verge of big things in the Mountain West. The Cowboys broke through with an 8–6 mark in 2016 (four of the six losses came by three points) and a share of the Mountain Division title. Bohl spent eight seasons at Nebraska in the late 1990s and early 2000s; he would be a good fit with the Cornhuskers if Mike Riley doesn't get things going in Lincoln.

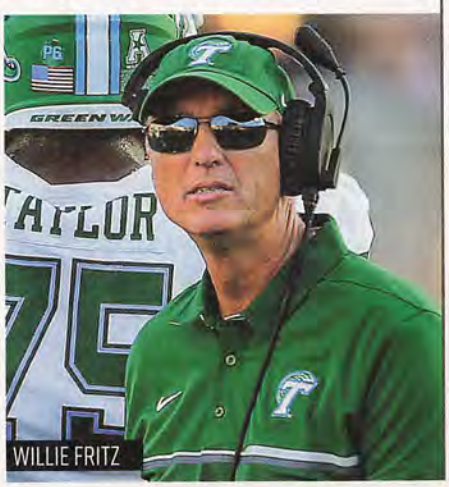

LINCOLN RILEY

9. WILLIE FRITZ
Head Coach, Tulane

Fritz won only four games in his first season at Tulane, but there is no doubt the guy knows how to coach. He's been a head coach for 20 seasons (at Division II, FCS and FBS) and has had only three losing seasons — 2017 at Tulane and 1997 and 2006 at Central Missouri. Tulane might be the toughest job in the AAC, but it will be a surprise if the Green Wave don't make significant progress soon.

10. JASON CANDLE
Head Coach, Toledo

The transition from Matt Campbell to Candle was seamless. The Rockets went 9–4 overall in 2016, with three of the losses coming by five points or fewer and the fourth to Western Michigan, which went undefeated in the regular season. Toledo's offense was among the finest in the nation, ranking seventh in yards per game (517.8), fifth in yards per play (7.2) and 19th in points per game (38.0).


WILLIE FRITZ

RANKING 2016's NEW COACHES



JUSTIN FUENTE


MARK RICHT

1. JUSTIN FUENTE, VIRGINIA TECH

Before: 7-6 (4-4) After: 10-4 (6-2)

Fuente restored order in Blacksburg, guiding a Virginia Tech program that had slipped several notches down the ACC food chain (16–16 in league play from 2012-15) to an outright Coastal Division title. The biggest gains were made on offense; the Hokies averaged 444.9 yards per game, the most since the 1999 team that played in the BCS National Championship Game averaged 451.8.

2. CLAY HELTON, USC

Before: 8-6 (6-3) After: 10-3 (7-2)

Helton's first full season as the boss at USC got off to a rocky start, but the Trojans won their final nine games, including victories over Pac-12 South champ Colorado, Pac-12 North champ Washington and Big Ten champ Penn State. They averaged 40.4 points in their 10 wins.

3. SCOTT FROST, UCF

Before: 0-12 (0-8) After: 6-7 (4-4)

Don't let UCF's 2015 record fool you: This was not a total rebuild. Still, Frost did an outstanding job in Orlando, improving by six wins overall and four in league games. Defense was the key to the turnaround; the Knights allowed 4.8 yards per play in 2016, down from 6.5 in '15.

4. NICK ROLOVICH, HAWAII

Before: 3-10 (0-8) After: 7-7 (4-4)

Rolovich picked up the pieces from the failed Norm Chow era and managed to lead his alma mater to its first non-losing season since 2010. The Rainbow Warriors improved their point differential vs. Mountain West opponents from minus-24.7 per game in 2015 to minus-6.9 in '16.

5. KALANI SITAKE, BYU

Before: 9-4 After: 9-4

Amazingly, Sitake's first five games as a head coach were decided by three points or fewer. The Cougars went 2–3 in those games, with each loss coming to a Power 5 opponent (Utah, UCLA and West Virginia). Their fourth loss, at Boise State, was by one point. This team was very close to winning 10, 11 or even 12 games.

6. MARK RICHT, MIAMI (FLA.)

Before: 8-5 (5-3) After: 9-4 (5-3)

The record looks similar, but there is no denying that Miami was a better team in 2016. The Hurricanes won their five league games by an average of 18 points, and three of their four overall losses came by seven points or fewer. This was a very good team.

7. TRACY CLAEYS, MINNESOTA

Before: 6-7 (2-6) After: 9-4 (5-4)

Claeys, who was named the permanent coach after holding the interim tag for the final six games of the 2015 season, guided Minnesota to nine wins for only the second time since 1905. He was fired in early January due in part to his involvement in a sexual assault case involving football players.

8. FRANK WILSON, UTSA

Before: 3-9 (3-5) After: 6-7 (5-3)

Known for his recruiting prowess as an assistant at LSU, Wilson did outstanding work in his first season as a head coach. The Roadrunners didn't make huge statistical gains but managed to improve their win total by three and earn a bowl invite for the first time in the program's five seasons.

9. WILL MUSCHAMP, SOUTH CAROLINA

Before: 3-9 (1-7) After: 6-7 (3-5)

Muschamp, who was fired after four seasons at Florida (2011-14), was not a popular hire at South Carolina, but he did a nice job in his first year in Columbia. The Gamecocks beat three SEC East rivals — Vanderbilt, Tennessee and Missouri — and returned to a bowl game after a one-year hiatus. Most important: They identified a quarterback of the future, Jake Bentley.

10. JASON CANDLE, TOLEDO

Before: 10-2 (6-2) After: 9-4 (6-2)

Candle, who served as the school's offensive coordinator under Matt Campbell, kept the Rockets humming with another solid season. Toledo won at least nine games for the fifth time in the last six seasons on the strength of an offense that set a school record with 517.8 yards per game.

11. D.J. DURKIN, MARYLAND

Before: 3-9 (1-7) After: 6-7 (3-6)

The Terrapins managed to become bowl eligible without beating a team that had a winning record in 2016, but six wins overall and three in the Big Ten is still notable progress. Another sign of (relative) progress: Every Big Ten loss came to a team that played in a bowl game. One negative: Only one of the Terps' Big Ten losses came by fewer than 21 points.

12. MIKE NORVELL, MEMPHIS

Before: 9-4 (5-3) After: 8-5 (5-3)

Memphis wasn't as relevant nationally as it was in 2015 — when the Tigers spent five weeks in the AP top 25 — but Norvell did an outstanding job keeping the program afloat in the competitive AAC without Paxton Lynch taking snaps at quarterback.

13. SETH LITTRELL, NORTH TEXAS

Before: 1-11 (1-7) After: 5-8 (3-5)

North Texas, ranked No. 128 in the nation in *Athlon Sports'* 2016 preseason poll, beat two bowl teams (Army and Southern Miss) en route to a four-win improvement in Littrell's first season. Former Alabama quarterback Alec Morris started four games.

14. MATT VIATOR, ULM

Before: 2-11 (1-7) After: 4-8 (3-5)

The Warhawks made nice progress in Viator's first season, winning three Sun Belt games — and losing two others by a combined five points. On the negative side: ULM's defense allowed 6.7 yards per play, up from 5.6 in 2015.

15. KIRBY SMART, GEORGIA

Before: 10-3 (5-3) After: 8-5 (4-4)

The future looks very bright in Athens — Smart and his staff signed a top-5 recruiting class — but the product on the field was average in 2016. Some will point out that

Fuente: Chris Keane; Richt: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Babers: Bruce Schwartzman; Ash: Craig Mitchelldyer

2017 Coaching Carousel

A total of 21 programs changed hands in a busy offseason. Here's how we rank the new hires.

1. Tom Herman, Texas
2. P.J. Fleck, Minnesota
3. Willie Taggart, Oregon
4. Jeff Brohm, Purdue
5. Matt Rhule, Baylor
6. Charlie Strong, USF
7. Mike Sanford, Western Kentucky
8. Lane Kiffin, FAU
9. Randy Edsall, UConn
10. Ed Orgeron, LSU
11. Tom Allen, Indiana
12. Geoff Collins, Temple
13. Luke Fickell, Cincinnati
14. Butch Davis, FIU
15. Justin Wilcox, California
16. Major Applewhite, Houston
17. Tim Lester, Western Michigan
18. Jeff Tedford, Fresno State
19. Brent Brennan, San Jose State
20. Jay Norvell, Nevada
21. Shawn Elliott, Georgia State

the Dawgs were one play away from beating Tennessee, Vanderbilt and Georgia Tech. They should also point out that Georgia beat Nichols by two points, Missouri by one and Kentucky by three.

16. WILLIE FRITZ, TULANE

Before: 3-9 (1-7) After: 4-8 (1-7)

Fritz suffered through just the third losing season in his 20 seasons as a head coach. But progress was made at Tulane. The Green Wave increased their win total by one game and were more competitive overall; four of their eight losses came by 10 points or fewer — compared to one of nine losses by 10 points or fewer in 2015.

17. MATT CAMPBELL, IOWA STATE

Before: 3-9 (2-7) After: 3-9 (2-7)

The Cyclones won only three games in 2016 but were painfully close to winning several more and flirting with bowl eligibility. On consecutive Saturdays in October, Iowa State lost to Baylor and Oklahoma State despite holding double-digit fourth-quarter leads.

18. DINO BABERS, SYRACUSE

Before: 4-8 (2-6) After: 4-8 (2-6)

The records were identical, both overall and in league play. On the positive side: The 2016 Orange beat ACC Coastal champ Virginia Tech and improved their total offense output by 120.9 yards per game. On the negative side: The 2016 Orange's average margin of defeat was 26.3 points per game, up from 13.9 per game in 2015.

19. JAY HOPSON, SOUTHERN MISS

Before: 9-5 (7-1) After: 7-6 (4-4)

The Golden Eagles opened strong with a win at Kentucky and closed strong with wins over Louisiana Tech and Louisiana-Lafayette (in the New Orleans Bowl) but otherwise struggled through a disappointing season.

20. BARRY ODOM, MISSOURI

Before: 5-7 (1-7) After: 4-8 (2-6)

The Tigers closed Odom's first season on a positive note with two wins in their last three games (at home over Vanderbilt and Arkansas). The defense took a big step back, regressing from 4.3 yards allowed per play in 2015 to 6.1 in '16 — a big surprise considering that Odom was the Tigers' defensive coordinator prior to taking over as the head coach.

21. MIKE NEU, BALL STATE

Before: 3-9 (2-6) After: 4-8 (1-7)

The Cardinals won only one MAC game but were a bit more competitive in 2016; six of their eight losses came by 10 points or fewer, and all three of their FBS wins came on the road.

22. LOVIE SMITH, ILLINOIS

Before: 5-7 (2-6) After: 3-9 (2-7)

The Fighting Illini regressed both offensively and defensively in Smith's first season as a collegiate head coach. In addition, they lost seven games by more than 20 points and went 0-6 against teams from the Big Ten West.

23. MIKE JINKS, BOWLING GREEN

Before: 10-4 (7-1) After: 4-8 (3-5)

The Jinks era got off to a brutal start — the Falcons gave up 77 points two times in September — but there was noticeable improvement as the season progressed. After a 1-8 start, Bowling Green closed with wins over Akron, Kent State and Buffalo.

24. BRONCO MENDENHALL, VIRGINIA

Before: 4-8 (3-5) After: 2-10 (1-7)

After winning an average of 9.0 games in his 11 seasons at BYU, Mendenhall found life at Virginia to be very difficult. The Cavs won only one ACC game (at Duke) despite not playing either Clemson or Florida State.

25. SCOTTIE MONTGOMERY, EAST CAROLINA

Before: 5-7 (3-5) After: 3-9 (1-7)

The Pirates regressed significantly under Montgomery, the former David Cutcliffe pupil at Duke. East Carolina, which averaged 7.8 wins in the final four seasons of the Ruffin McNeill era, defeated only two FBS opponents and ended the season with losses in nine of its last 10 games.

26. TYSON SUMMERS, GEORGIA SOUTHERN

Before: 9-4 (6-2) After: 5-7 (4-4)

Summers might have been one-and-done in Statesboro had the Eagles not defeated Troy to end the 2016 season. It's safe to say the pressure will be on Georgia Southern to return to the top of the Sun Belt this fall.

27. CHRIS ASH, RUTGERS

Before: 4-8 (1-7) After: 2-10 (0-9)

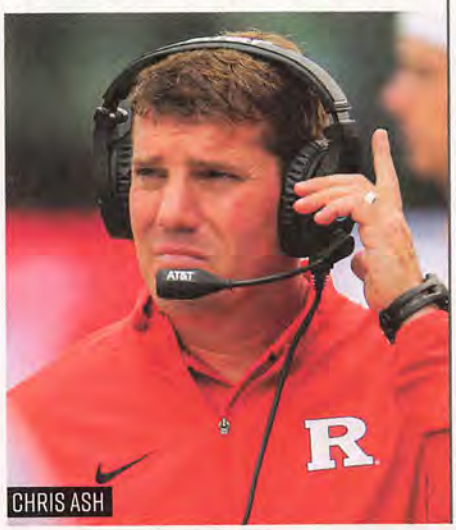
The Scarlet Knights went winless in the Big Ten thanks in large part to an offense that scored a total of 86 points in nine conference games (including four shutouts). There is much work to be done on the banks of the Raritan River.

28. EVERETT WITHERS, TEXAS STATE

Before: 3-9 (2-6) After: 2-10 (0-8)

The Bobcats were arguably the worst team in the nation. After opening the year with a solid win at Ohio, they proceeded to lose their remaining 10 games against FBS competition, including all eight in the Sun Belt.


DINO BABERS


CHRIS ASH

QB TRANSFERS

KYLE ALLEN, TEXAS A&M TO HOUSTON

The top quarterback recruit in the class of 2014, Allen started 14 games in his two seasons at Texas A&M, including an MVP performance in the Liberty Bowl when he threw for 294 yards and four touchdowns in a win against West Virginia.

BLAKE BARNETT, ALABAMA TO ARIZONA STATE

Barnett, who started Alabama's Week 1 win over USC last season, received word in late January that he would be eligible immediately at Arizona State. A five-star recruit from Southern California, Barnett is considered the favorite to beat out incumbent Manny Wilkins for the starting QB spot. He will have three years of eligibility remaining.

MAX BROWNE, USC TO PITTSBURGH

The 2012 Gatorade National Player of the Year, Browne spent two seasons as the Trojans' No. 2 QB (behind Cody Kessler) before earning the start in Week 1 of the 2016 season. His spot atop the depth chart lasted only three weeks, however, as USC struggled early in the season. Browne will have one season of eligibility at Pitt.

DAVID CORNWELL, ALABAMA TO NEVADA

Cornwell, a graduate transfer with two years of eligibility, will be a welcome addition for Jay Norvell, the new Nevada coach. Norvell was at Oklahoma in 2014 when Cornwell, a Norman, Okla., native, signed with Alabama.

WILL GRIER, FLORIDA TO WEST VIRGINIA

Grier was off to a great start at Florida in 2015 before missing the final eight games of the season due to a PED-related suspension. Assuming he is eligible at the start of the 2017 season — which West Virginia believes will be the case — Grier is almost a lock to start when the Mountaineers take on Virginia Tech at FedEx Field in Landover, Md.

BRANDON HARRIS, LSU TO NORTH CAROLINA

Harris' career stalled at LSU — but he's not the first highly rated quarterback recruit to struggle in Baton Rouge. The biggest knock on him has been his accuracy; he completed only 53.8 percent of his passes in 2015, when he started 12 games for the Tigers.

CALEB HENDERSON, NORTH CAROLINA TO MARYLAND

A four-star recruit from Virginia, Henderson was buried behind Marquise Williams and Mitch Trubisky during his time at North Carolina. He and sophomore Tyrrell Pigrome will be the top two competitors for the starting assignment in the fall.

TANNER LEE, TULANE TO NEBRASKA

Lee, a Louisiana native, started 19 games at Tulane, 10 games as a redshirt freshman in 2014 and nine as a sophomore in 2015. He was granted an extra year of eligibility by the NCAA and will have two seasons remaining at Nebraska despite starting college in 2013.

JAKE LUTON, IDAHO TO OREGON STATE (VIA JC)

Luton left Idaho after two seasons when he failed to unseat starting quarterback Matt Linehan. In his one year at Ventura (Calif.) College, the 6'7" Washington native threw for 3,551 yards with 40 touchdowns and 15 interceptions. He will battle several holdovers for the No. 1 job at Oregon State.

SHANE MORRIS, MICHIGAN TO CENTRAL MICHIGAN

Morris' tenure at Michigan will be remembered more for the Brady Hoke/concussion controversy in 2014 than for anything else he did on the field. Morris was beaten out by Jake Ruddock in 2015 and Wilton Speight in 2016 and will head CMU as the favorite to replace Cooper Rush as the Chippewas' QB.

KYLER MURRAY, TEXAS A&M TO OKLAHOMA

A five-star recruit, Murray started three games as a true freshman for the Aggies in 2015. In the short term, the best hope for the athletic but undersized Murray (listed at 5'10") is to be used as a change-of-pace option to spell Heisman candidate Baker Mayfield. There has also been talk that Murray will be used as a wide receiver.

THOMAS SIRK, DUKE TO ECU

Sirk was one of the nation's top dual-threat quarterbacks in 2015, his only season as a starter. He threw for 2,625 yards and rushed for 803 to lead an eight-win Duke team that finished third in the ACC in total offense. He missed the 2016 season with a torn Achilles in his left leg and opted to transfer rather than return for a sixth season.

ANU SOLOMON, ARIZONA TO BAYLOR

Solomon was highly productive in his first two seasons at Arizona (throwing for a combined 6,460 yards and 48 TDs) before struggling in 2016 — due in large part to injury. His skill set is similar to P.J. Walker's, who started for four years at Temple under new Baylor coach Matt Rhule.


JARRETT STIDHAM

JARRETT STIDHAM, BAYLOR TO AUBURN (VIA JC)

After a brief stop at a junior college in Texas, Stidham arrives in Auburn with the opportunity to be the most impactful newcomer in the nation in 2017. Coach Gus Malzahn insists the quarterback job is open, but it will be a major surprise if Stidham does not beat out incumbent Sean White.

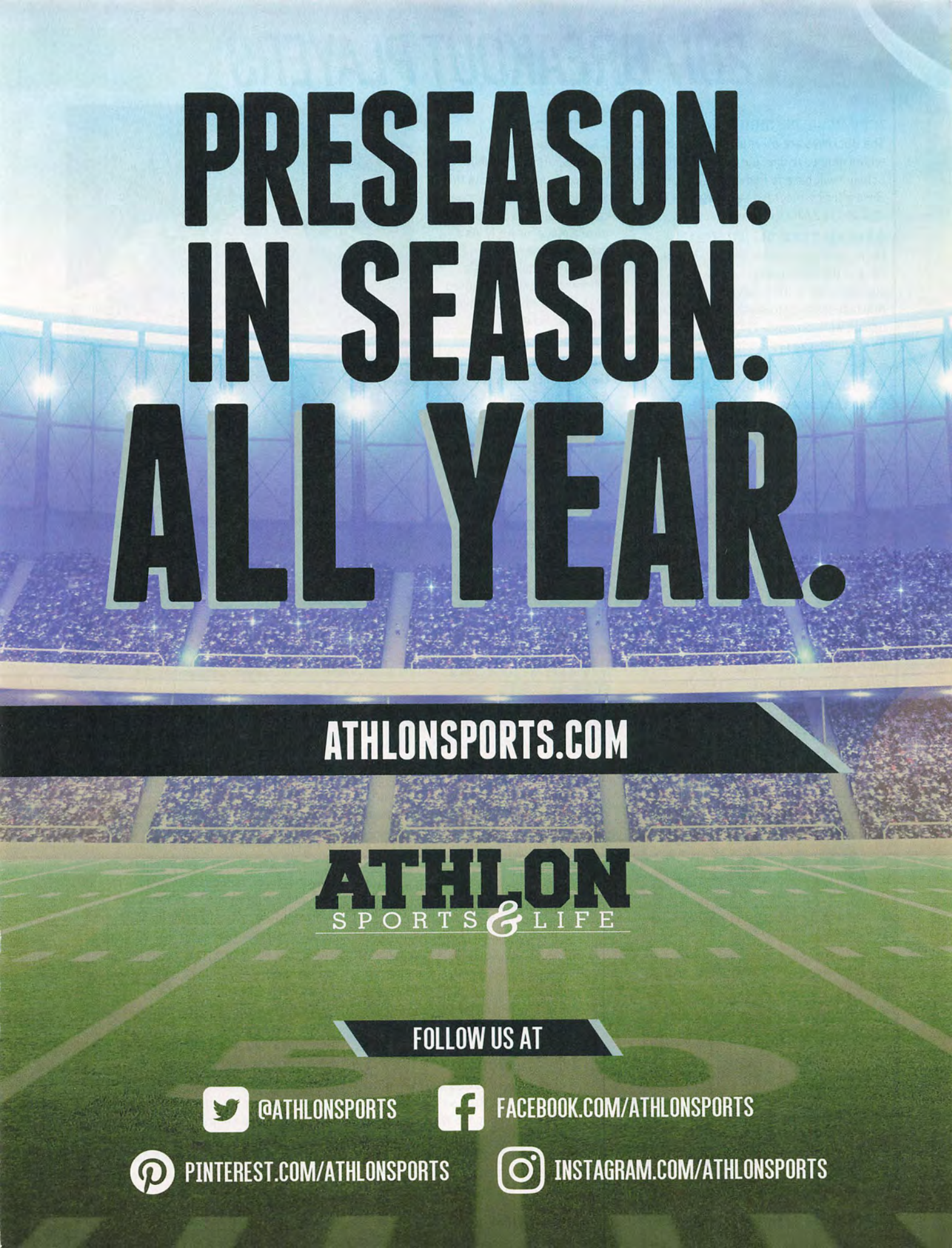
MALIK ZAIRE, NOTRE DAME TO TBD

The MVP of the 2014 Music City Bowl, Zaire appeared to be well-positioned for big things at Notre Dame ... until he suffered a broken ankle in Week 2 of the 2015 season. He lost a heated battle with DeShone Kizer last fall and attempted only 23 passes in 2016. He will be eligible as a graduate transfer in '17.

OTHER TRANSFERS OF NOTE

Jeff Badet, WR, Kentucky to Oklahoma
Jalen Brown, WR, Oregon to Northwestern
Freddy Canteen, WR, Michigan to Notre Dame
Chris Clark, TE, UCLA to Pittsburgh
Aaron Cochran, OL, California to Oklahoma St.
Jordan Davis, TE, Texas A&M to Louisville
Dee Delaney, DB, The Citadel to Miami
Cam Dillard, C, Florida to North Carolina
Chris James, RB, Pittsburgh to Wisconsin
Tyron Johnson, WR, LSU to Oklahoma State
T.J. McCollum, LB, WKU to Purdue
Kirk Merritt, WR, Oregon to Texas A&M
Scott Pagano, DL, Clemson to Oregon
Khaliel Rodgers, OL, USC to North Carolina
Corey Winfield, CB, Syracuse to West Virginia

Stidham: Auburn Athletics;


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2017 BREAKOUT PLAYERS

NICK BOSA, DL, OHIO STATE
The Buckeyes are overflowing with talent on the defensive line, but coordinator Greg Schiano will have to find more snaps for Bosa after he recorded seven tackles for a loss and five sacks in limited action.

RASHAN GARY, DL, MICHIGAN
Michigan's deep defensive line prevented Gary — the No. 1 overall recruit in the 2016 signing class — from carving out a starting role last season. However, his potential and upside were on display in limited snaps, as he recorded five tackles for a loss and one sack.

RASHEEM GREEN, DL, USC
Greene just scratched the surface of his potential in his first year as a starter in 2016. His emergence is crucial for USC's defense after the departure of standout nose tackle Stevie Tu'ikolovatu.

WILL GRIER, QB, WEST VIRGINIA
Grier was poised to take a spot among the SEC's top quarterbacks in 2015, but a season-ending suspension after he led Florida to a 6–0 start prompted a transfer to West Virginia. Grier is the program's most talented quarterback since Geno Smith.

JAUAN JENNINGS, WR, TENNESSEE
Jennings committed to Tennessee as a quarterback but shifted to receiver in 2015. After catching 14 passes as a freshman, Jennings was a bigger part of the offense in 2016 and caught 40 passes for 580 yards and seven scores. With Josh Malone gone, Jennings is Tennessee's No. 1 receiver.


BRYCE LOVE

CALEB KELLY, LB, OKLAHOMA
The Sooners will be shifting to more four-man fronts this season. Regardless of scheme, coordinator Mike Stoops will have a place for Kelly. As a true freshman last year, he showed the ability to be a difference maker and closed 2016 by recording 12 tackles in the Sugar Bowl.

BRYCE LOVE, RB, STANFORD
Christian McCaffrey will be missed, but Stanford's ground game won't suffer much with Love as the full-time back. As McCaffrey's top backup, Love recorded 783 yards and two touchdowns.

DEDRICK MILLS, RB, GEORGIA TECH
No Georgia Tech running back has eclipsed 1,000 rushing yards in Paul Johnson's option attack since 2010. Look for Mills to break that streak after rushing for 771 yards as a true freshman last year.


DEDRICK MILLS

NYQWAN MURRAY, WR FLORIDA STATE
Murray emerged as a trusted option for quarterback Deondre Francois late in the 2016 season. Over Florida State's last six games, Murray caught 22 passes and five touchdowns. With Travis Rudolph departing for the NFL, he's due for even bigger role in the passing game in 2017.

SHEA PATTERSON, QB, OLE MISS
Chad Kelly's season-ending knee injury forced coach Hugh Freeze to remove Patterson's redshirt for the final three games of 2016. Patterson proved that he was worthy of his five-star hype coming out of high school during that audition, throwing for 880 yards and six touchdowns and rushing for 169 yards.

TAYLOR RAPP, DB, WASHINGTON
Sidney Jones and Budda Baker will be missed, but Rapp's emergence will ease the transition in Washington's secondary. He played in all 14 games last season, recorded four interceptions and earned Pac-12 Defensive Freshman of the Year honors.

TIM SETTLE, DT, VIRGINIA TECH
Standout play in the trenches is usually an annual strength for the Hokies, and coordinator Bud Foster has his next star in Settle. After a redshirt year in 2015, Settle played in 14 games as a reserve last season and recorded seven tackles for a loss.

JARRETT STIDHAM, QB, AUBURN
Stidham is the missing piece for an Auburn's offense that has struggled to establish a consistent passing game in recent seasons. He threw for 1,265 yards and 12 scores in 10 games at Baylor in 2015.

TRENTON THOMPSON, DL, GEORGIA
Thompson finished 2016 with a dominant performance (3.5 tackles for a loss) in Georgia's Liberty Bowl win over TCU. The junior took a leave of absence this spring, but the former No. 1 overall recruit in the 2015 signing class is slated to return for the fall.

BRANDON WIMBUSH, QB, NOTRE DAME
Wimbush is coming off a redshirt year after receiving limited snaps as a true freshman in 2015. The sophomore should thrive under new coordinator Chip Long, and his development is critical for Notre Dame's hopes of improvement after a 4–8 season.

Love: Peter Brouillet; Mills: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports



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BACK FROM INJURY

NATE ANDREWS, DB, FLORIDA STATE
Alabama native has been an impact player in the Seminoles' secondary — when healthy. He battled through injuries as a junior in 2015 and then missed the final seven games of last season with a torn pectoral muscle. Andrews will be a fifth-year senior in 2017.

DRAVON ASKEW-HENRY, DB WEST VIRGINIA
Askew-Henry broke into the starting lineup as a true freshman and started all 26 games in 2014 and '15. He was expected to replace Karl Joseph as the leader of the Mountaineers' secondary last fall but went down with a knee injury in preseason camp.

MARCELL ATEMAN, WR OKLAHOMA STATE
A big receiver who enjoyed a breakthrough junior season in 2015 (45 catches for 766 yards), Ateman had surgery on his foot last summer and was unable to play in 2016.

DREW BARKER, QB, KENTUCKY
Barker was limited to only three games due to a back injury in his first season as the Wildcats' full-time starter. He will battle senior Stephen Johnson, who guided UK to a bowl game, for the No. 1 job in 2017.

TERRY BECKNER, DL, MISSOURI
One of the top recruits to sign with Missouri in recent years, Beckner has gone down with ACL tears in each of the last two seasons (right knee in 2015, left knee in '16). If healthy, he has the ability to be one of the top defensive linemen in the SEC.

YODNY CAJUSTE, OL, WEST VIRGINIA
In 2015 as a redshirt freshman, Cajuste started the first six games at left tackle before sustaining a foot injury against Baylor. Last year, he went down with a torn ACL in his left knee in a Week 1 win over Missouri.

KELLER CHRYST, QB, STANFORD
Chryst's availability is in doubt after he tore the ACL in his right knee in the Cardinal's win over North Carolina in the Sun Bowl. Ryan Burns, who started seven games last season, initially planned to transfer but has decided to return due to Chryst's status.

JACK CICHY, LB, WISCONSIN
Cichy was playing at a very high level when he was sidelined with a torn pectoral muscle in the Badgers' win at Iowa in late October. He will join Chris Orr — who missed all but one game last season — in what should be one of the Big Ten's best linebacking corps.

TYRELL CROSBY, OL, OREGON
Crosby started 12 games at right tackle as a sophomore in 2015. He moved over to left tackle in 2016 but played in only two games due to a foot injury. He is expected to start at left tackle for Willie Taggart's club in 2017.

SHAUN DION HAMILTON, LB, ALABAMA
Hamilton, who started at inside linebacker, tore the ACL in his right knee in the SEC Championship Game. Alabama is hopeful he will be ready for Week 1.

KYLIE FITTS, DL, UTAH
The one-time UCLA Bruin emerged as a force in 2015, starting 11 games at end and ranking fourth in the league with 7.0 sacks. He started one game at end and one game at linebacker in 2016 before a foot injury ended his season.


SKAI MOORE

DERWIN JAMES, S, FLORIDA STATE
A five-star recruit, James enjoyed an outstanding freshman season in 2015 and seemingly was on his way to an All-America sophomore campaign last fall. But he played in only two games due to a knee injury (torn meniscus) suffered in an early September game against Charleston Southern.

CHRISTIAN LACOUTURE, DL, LSU
LaCouture was a mainstay on the LSU defensive line (23 starts in 2014-15) before being sidelined with a season-ending knee injury early in camp last August. He will be expected to rejoin the starting lineup in his fifth and final season.

TOA LOBENDAHN, OL, USC
Lobendahn started the first seven games (five at right guard, two at center) of his sophomore season before tearing the ACL in his left knee in a win over Utah in October. He returned to the lineup last fall but tore the ACL and MCL in his right knee in a Week 1 loss to Alabama. Assuming he's healthy, Lobendahn could play any spot on the offensive line.

SKAI MOORE, LB, SOUTH CAROLINA
A second-team All-SEC pick as a junior in 2015, Moore was expected to anchor Will Muschamp's defense in the coach's first year in Columbia. But the Florida native was forced to miss what would have been his true senior season with a neck injury. Moore is a safe bet to lead South Carolina in tackles for the fourth time.

JOSH ROSEN, QB, UCLA
One of the top quarterback talents in the nation, Rosen missed the final six games of his sophomore season with a shoulder injury. He is one of a few candidates to be the No. 1 pick in the 2017 NFL Draft.

MATT VANDEBERG, WR, IOWA
VandeBerg developed into a reliable threat in the Hawkeyes' passing attack as a junior in 2015, catching a team-high 65 passes for 703 yards. He had 19 receptions for 284 yards through four games in 2016 before a broken foot ended his season.

AZEEM VICTOR, LB, WASHINGTON
The Huskies lost one of their top defensive players last November to a leg injury that kept him out of the remainder of the regular season and the College Football Playoff loss to Alabama. He will be back to lead a revamped UW defense in 2017.

CHRIS WARREN, RB, TEXAS
Warren was on his way to a productive junior season — he had 366 yards on 62 attempts through three-plus games — before going down with a knee injury against Oklahoma State. With D'Onta Foreman (and his 2,028 rushing yards) gone to the NFL, Warren is expected to be Texas' primary ball carrier.

TREVON YOUNG, LB, LOUISVILLE
Young missed the entire 2016 season while recovering from a serious hip injury suffered in the '15 Music City Bowl. A starter at outside linebacker, Young recorded 8.5 sacks as a junior in his second season after transferring to Louisville from junior college.

Moore: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Oliver: @UHCougarFB; James: Brent Beerends/MT Athletic Communications

TOP 20 'GROUP OF 5' PLAYERS


ED OLIVER

1. ED OLIVER, HOUSTON, DT
The Houston native made an immediate impact on the Cougars' defense, becoming the first true freshman to earn first-team AP All-America honors since 2011. Oliver (No. 6 in the 247Sports Composite) was the highest-rated prospect to sign with a non-Power 5 school in the Internet recruiting era.

2. QUINTON FLOWERS, QB, USF
Flowers was one of the most underrated players in the nation last season. He and Lamar Jackson — the Heisman Trophy winner — were the only two players to top 1,500 yards rushing and 2,500 yards passing. He accounted for 42 touchdowns as well.

3. RICHIE JAMES, WR, MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Overlooked by SEC schools due to his size — he's listed at 5'9", 178 pounds — James has been one of the most productive wide receivers in the nation the last two seasons. He followed up a 108-catch, 1,346-yard redshirt freshman campaign in 2015 with 105 catches for 1,625 yards last fall.

4. WILL HERNANDEZ, OL, UTEP
Hernandez has been a fixture on the Miners' offensive line, starting 37 straight games at left guard. He became the first UTEP offensive lineman since 2009 to earn first-team All-C-USA honors as a junior in 2016.

5. LOGAN WOODSIDE, QB, TOLEDO
Woodside was brilliant in his return to action after missing the 2015 season with an injury. He led the nation with 45 touchdown passes and ranked third in yards per attempt (9.9).

6. BRENT STOCKSTILL, QB MIDDLE TENNESSEE
The son of the Blue Raiders' head coach has been terrific in his two seasons as the starter. He threw for 4,005 yards as a true freshman in 2015 and 3,233 last year despite missing three-plus games with an injury. Last fall, he threw for 280 yards and four TDs and rushed for 81 yards in MTSU's 51–45 win at Missouri.

7. COURTLAND SUTTON, WR, SMU
Sutton emerged as a big-play threat for the Mustangs as a sophomore, catching 76 passes for 1,246 yards and 10 touchdowns. He is averaging a healthy 16.9 yards per reception in his two seasons.

8. JA'VON ROLLAND-JONES, DL, ARKANSAS STATE
Rolland-Jones was named the Sun Belt Player of the Year after a banner junior season in which recorded 11.5 sacks and tied for the league lead with 18.5 tackles for a loss. He averaged over a sack per game in league play.

9. JAYLON FERGUSON, DL, LOUISIANA TECH
Ferguson is the latest standout defensive lineman for Tech. Last season, he earned first-team All-Conference USA honors after leading the league with 14.5 sacks.

10. MIKE WHITE, QB, WKU
White flourished in his first season at WKU after transferring from South Florida, throwing for 4,363 yards and 37 touchdowns and — more impressive — ranking second nationally with 10.5 yards per passing attempt. He will play his final season under new coach Mike Sanford.

11. BRETT RYPIEN, QB, BOISE STATE
The nephew of the former Super Bowl-winning quarterback Mark Rypien has enjoyed two solid seasons running the Boise State attack. Last fall, he threw for 3,646 yards and 24 touchdowns.

12. JOSH ALLEN, QB, WYOMING
The former junior college transfer is emerging as a legitimate NFL prospect. He threw for 3,203 yards and 28 touchdowns while adding 523 yards on the ground. He will need to cut down on his interceptions as a senior; he threw 15 in 2016.

13. ANTHONY MILLER, WR, MEMPHIS
Miller was highly productive in his first season as the Tigers' No. 1 receiver. The Memphis native caught 95 passes for 1,434 yards and 14 touchdowns, highlighted by a 12-catch, 250-yard effort against Tulsa.

14. SHAQUEM GRIFFIN, LB, UCF
Griffin was named the Defensive Player of the Year in the AAC in a vote by the league's coaches. He led the league in sacks (11.0) and was third in tackles for a loss (19.0).

15. ANDREW WINGARD, S, WYOMING
Wingard followed up a Freshman All-America season in 2015 by tying for fourth nationally with 131 tackles and earning first-team All-Mountain West honors.

16. ITO SMITH, RB, SOUTHERN MISS
Smith opened up his junior season by rushing for 173 yards in Southern Miss' comeback win at Kentucky and proceeded to top the 100-yard mark seven more times en route to a 1,459-yard campaign.

17. JAKE BENNETT, C, COLORADO STATE
Bennett has started 26 straight games for the Rams, including 13 at center last season. He earned second-team All-Mountain West honors in 2016 and projects to be one of the top centers in college football this fall and a legitimate NFL prospect.

18. CHUKWUMA OKORAFOR, OT, WESTERN MICHIGAN
One of the top recruits of the P.J. Fleck era, Okorafor moved from right to left tackle in 2016 and anchored an offensive line that averaged a MAC-high 41.6 points per game.

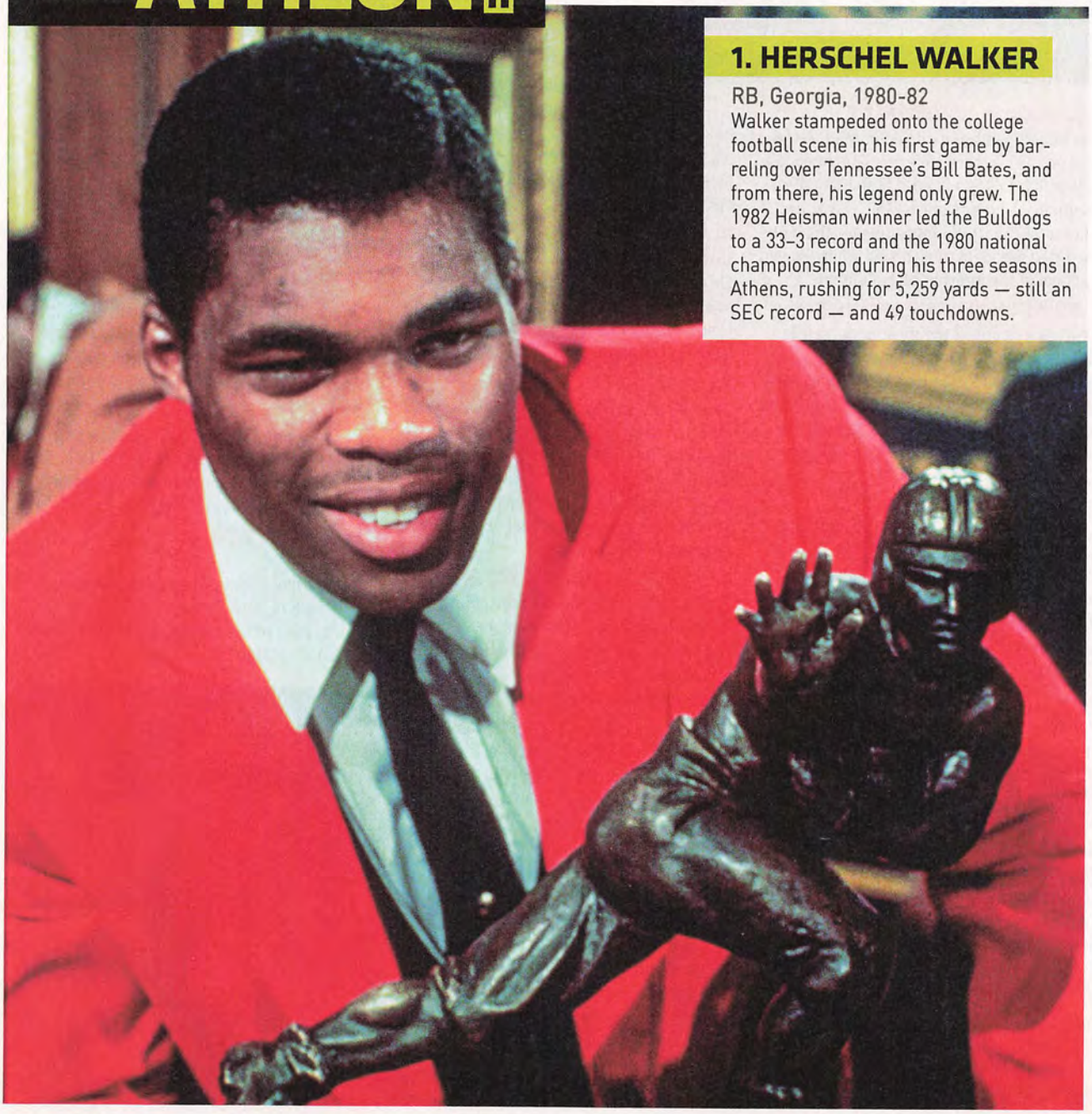
19. QUENTIN POLING, LB, OHIO
Poling is entering his fourth season as a starter at inside linebacker for the Bobcats. He earned first-team All-MAC honors in 2016 after recording 109 tackles.

20. ULYSEES GILBERT III, LB, AKRON
Gilbert, like Poling, was a first-team All-MAC pick in 2016. The 6'1", 225-pound Ocala, Fla., native ranked third in the league with 121 tackles.


RICHIE JAMES

TOP 50 COLLEGE PLAYERS of the ATHLON ERA

The inaugural edition of *Athlon Sports* was published in 1967, the same year that a running back named O.J. Simpson led the USC Trojans to the national championship. As we celebrate 50 years of covering the sport, we thought it would be fun to take a deep dive and compile a ranking of the top 50 players of the *Athlon Sports* era. This wasn't easy. Our checklist contained more than 300 players, each of whom received either first-team All-America honors or won a major postseason award. To help us sort through the list of all-time greats, we assembled a panel of college football experts (see box next page). Each member submitted a list of top 50 players, and we used a simple formula to tabulate the final rankings: A player received 50 points for a first-place vote down to one point for a 50th-place vote. To be eligible, a player had to have played at least one season of college football between 1967 and 2016.



1. HERSCHEL WALKER

RB, Georgia, 1980-82

Walker stampeded onto the college football scene in his first game by barreling over Tennessee's Bill Bates, and from there, his legend only grew. The 1982 Heisman winner led the Bulldogs to a 33–3 record and the 1980 national championship during his three seasons in Athens, rushing for 5,259 yards — still an SEC record — and 49 touchdowns.

Walker: UGA Athletics; Others: Athlon Sports Archives

2. BARRY SANDERS

RB, Oklahoma State, 1986-88

The dazzlingly elusive Sanders had arguably the greatest individual season in college football history, rushing for 2,850 yards on 7.6 yards per carry and 42 touchdowns (including the bowl game) in his Heisman campaign of 1988. He scored 55 total touchdowns in his three-year career despite having only one season as the Cowboys' featured back.



BARRY SANDERS

3. ARCHIE GRIFFIN

RB, Ohio State, 1972-75

The only two-time winner of the Heisman Trophy, Griffin was a workhorse for Woody Hayes' Buckeyes, amassing 5,589 rushing yards (second in Big Ten history) on 924 carries. He led the Big Ten in rushing in 1973 (1,577 yards), '74 (1,695 yards) and '75 (1,450 yards) and averaged a robust 6.0 yards per attempt for his career.

4. EARL CAMPBELL

RB, Texas, 1974-77

The Tyler Rose left countless Southwest Conference defenders face-down on the turf or grasping at air. He left Austin with 4,443 rushing yards and won the 1977 Heisman Trophy with a 1,744-yard, 18-TD season for the 11–1 Longhorns. Even in the Horns' 38–10 Cotton Bowl loss to Notre Dame that cost them the national title, Campbell was a bright spot, rushing for 116 yards.

5. BO JACKSON

RB, Auburn, 1982-85

Jackson amassed quite a highlight reel in his first three seasons on The Plains, but his injury-free 1985 campaign was when it all came together: 1,786 rushing yards, 17 touchdowns and a Heisman Trophy. Jackson finished his career with 4,303 rushing yards and 45 total scores before becoming a folk hero and pop culture fixture with his multi-sport pro career.

6. TIM TEBOW

QB, Florida, 2006-09

The numbers are simply staggering: 9,285 passing yards and 88 touchdowns; 2,947 rushing yards and an SEC-record 57 scores on the ground; conference records for total touchdowns (145), passing yards per attempt (9.3) and passing efficiency rating (170.8). Oh, and there's the small matter of two national championships in his four seasons in Gainesville.

7. HUGH GREEN

DE, Pittsburgh, 1977-80

Green was perhaps the greatest, most productive defensive player in college football history. A three-time consensus first-team All-American (and a second-team selection as a freshman), Green finished his career with 460 tackles, 53 sacks, 52 tackles for a loss, 24 forced fumbles and 13 fumble recoveries before embarking on a decorated pro career. He finished second in the Heisman voting in 1980 following a 17-sack senior season.


BO JACKSON

THE PANEL

Tony Barnhart – former college football writer at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*; current columnist at GridIronNow
Michael Bradley – freelance college sports writer
Matt Brown – college football writer for Sports on Earth
Jimmy Burch – college sports writer at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*
Bill Connelly – college football writer for SB Nation
Rob Doster – senior editor at Athlon Sports
Chris Dufresne – former college football writer for the *Los Angeles Times*; co-founder of TMGCollegeSports.com
Bruce Feldman – college football writer at FoxSports.com
Steven Godfrey – college football writer for SB Nation
Herb Gould – former college football writer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*; co-founder of TMGCollegeSports.com
Bill King – host of The Bill King Show on 560/95.9 in Nashville
Tom Luicci – former college football writer for *The Star-Ledger* in Newark, N.J.
Ivan Maisel – college football writer for ESPN.com
Stewart Mandel – college football writer at FoxSports.com
Paul Myerberg – college football writer for *USA Today*
Bud Withers – former college football writer for the *Seattle Times*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *Eugene Register-Guard*



VINCE YOUNG

8. VINCE YOUNG

QB, Texas, 2003-05

Young authored arguably the greatest big-game performance in college football history — his 467-yard, three-touchdown outing in Texas' 41–38 win over USC in the Rose Bowl that gave the Horns the 2005 national title. But Young was far from a one-game wonder, passing for 6,040 yards, rushing for 3,127 and accounting for 81 touchdowns in three seasons. In Young's last two years in Austin, he led Texas to a 24–1 record, with two legendary Rose Bowl performances that yielded a combined 839 yards and eight touchdowns.

9. DEION SANDERS

CB, Florida State, 1985-88

One of the most electrifying players in football history, Sanders was a lockdown cornerback and special teams terror for some great teams in Tallahassee. Neon Deion intercepted 14 passes in his career, returning three of them for touchdowns, and he averaged 11.3 yards per punt return with three scores. He was a consensus All-American in 1987 and '88 and won the Thorpe Award in '88.

10. TONY DORSETT

RB, Pittsburgh, 1973-76

Dorsett stormed out of the gate, becoming the first freshman to be named a first-team All-American in 29 years, but he saved his best for last with a monster senior season that included 2,150 rushing yards (including the Sugar Bowl win over Georgia), a national championship and a Heisman Trophy. The three-time first-team All-American finished his career with 6,082 rushing yards, a record that would stand until 1998.

11. CHARLES WOODSON

DB/PR, Michigan, 1995-97

Woodson's 1997 Heisman Trophy was somewhat controversial at the time, coming at the expense of Tennessee quarterback Peyton Manning, but a closer look reveals that Woodson was a worthy choice. That season, he led the Big Ten with seven interceptions and scored a rushing touchdown, two receiving touchdowns and a punt return touchdown. He finished his career in Ann Arbor with 16 interceptions, 537 yards from scrimmage and six touchdowns.

12. TOMMIE FRAZIER

QB, Nebraska, 1992-95

Frazier was at his best when the stakes were highest. He directed two fourth-quarter TD drives in a 24–17 victory over Miami in the 1995 Orange Bowl that gave coach Tom Osborne his first national title. Then, in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl, he rushed for 199 yards and two TDs as Nebraska overwhelmed Florida 62–24 to win another national championship and claim a place among history's greatest teams.

13. LEE ROY SELMON

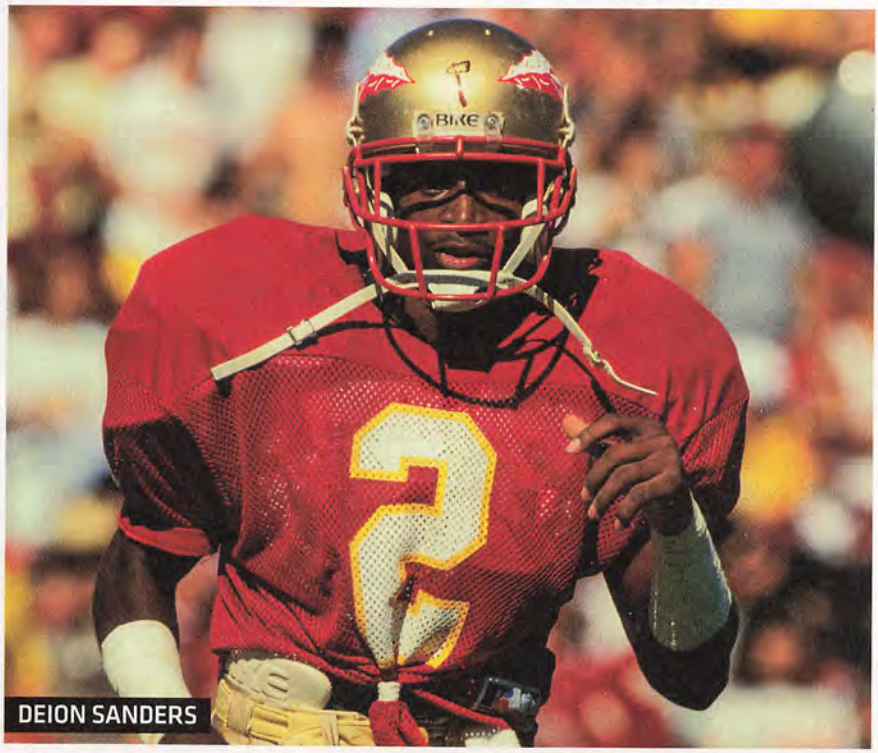
DT, Oklahoma, 1972-75

The youngest of the legendary Selmon brothers, Lee Roy was a dominant force for one of the best defenses in college football history. He was a consensus All-American for an OU team that won back-to-back national titles in 1974-75, and he won the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award in '75. Barry Switzer called Selmon the best player he ever coached.

14. REGGIE BUSH

RB, USC, 2003-05

With Bush at tailback, the Trojans lost only two games in three years — both by three points — and won two national championships. Bush possessed an utterly unique mix of skills and redefined the tailback position at Tailback U. During his Heisman year of 2005, Bush averaged 8.7 yards per carry, netting 1,740 yards. He finished his career with 25 rushing TDs, 13 receiving TDs and four more scores on returns.


DEION SANDERS

Athlon Sports Archives

THE ALL-ATHLON TEAM

THE ATHLON ERA DREAM TEAM CONSISTS OF 22 OF HISTORY'S GREATEST COLLEGIATE PLAYERS, EACH OF WHOM HAS A SPOT IN OUR TOP 50.

QB: Tim Tebow
RB: Herschel Walker, Barry Sanders
WR: Randy Moss, Larry Fitzgerald
TE: Keith Jackson
OL: John Hannah Jonathan Ogden, Orlando Pace, Anthony Munoz
C: Dave Rimington
DE: Hugh Green, Randy White
DT: Lee Roy Selmon, Ndamukong Suh
LB: Derrick Thomas, Lawrence Taylor, Brian Bosworth
CB: Charles Woodson, Deion Sanders
S: Ronnie Lott, Kenny Easley



INSIDE THE BALLOTS

Highest-ranked player missing from one ballot: Archie Griffin (No. 3)
Highest-ranked player missing from two ballots: Vince Young (No. 8)
Highest ranking for a player not in final top 50: Eddie George, 6th
Highest ranking for a player on only one ballot: Andre Ware, 17th
Numbers of players who received at least one vote: 137

NO. 1 VOTES	
Herschel Walker	9
Tim Tebow	3
Barry Sanders	2
Tommie Frazier	1
Cam Newton	1

PLAYERS ON EVERY BALLOT:
Herschel Walker
Barry Sanders
Earl Campbell

PLAYERS ON ALL BUT ONE BALLOT:
Archie Griffin
Bo Jackson
Tim Tebow
Hugh Green
Deion Sanders
Charles Woodson
Tommie Frazier

TOP 50 BY SCHOOL

USC	6
Nebraska	4
Ohio State	4
Oklahoma	3
Pittsburgh	3
Texas	3
Alabama	2
Auburn	2
Florida	2
Michigan	2
Tennessee	2
UCLA	2
Baylor	1
Boston College	1
Florida State	1
Georgia	1
Marshall	1
Maryland	1
Miami	1
Mississippi Valley State	1
North Carolina	1
Oklahoma State	1
Ole Miss	1
Oregon	1
Stanford	1
Virginia Tech	1
Washington	1


ORLANDO PACE

15. NDAMUKONG SUH
DT, Nebraska, 2005-09
One of history's most dominant interior defensive linemen, Suh authored a season for the ages in 2009 with 85 tackles, 12 sacks, 26 quarterback hurries, 20.5 tackles for a loss, 10 pass breakups, three blocked kicks and an interception. In the Huskers' 13–12 loss to Texas in the Big 12 Championship, Suh had 6.0 tackles for a loss and 4.5 sacks. He returned two interceptions for TDs as a junior.

16. ORLANDO PACE
OT, Ohio State, 1994-96
The father of the "pancake block" and one of the best offensive linemen in football history, Pace did not allow a sack during his final two seasons as a Buckeye, earning the Lombardi Award in 1995 and '96 and the Outland Trophy in 1996. In 1996, he finished fourth in Heisman Trophy balloting, the highest for an offensive lineman since OSU's John Hicks finished second 23 years earlier.

17. JOHN HANNAH
OL, Alabama, 1970-72
One of the best offensive linemen in college football history, Hannah was a two-time All-American who served as a road grader in the early days of Alabama's wishbone attack and earned a spot on Alabama's All-Century Team. Bear Bryant once called Hannah the greatest player he ever coached.

18. RONNIE LOTT
S, USC, 1978-80
Lott was an All-Pac-10 first-teamer in 1979 and '80, and was a unanimous All-American in 1980. He racked up 250 career tackles, including 22 for a loss. He also registered 14 interceptions and 37 pass breakups. As a senior, he picked off eight passes, tying for the NCAA lead, and deflected 16 other passes. Lott is undoubtedly one of the toughest, hardest-hitting players in the history of football.

19. DAVE RIMINGTON
C, Nebraska, 1979-82
Rimington earned back-to-back Outland trophies, the only player ever to do so, as well as the Lombardi Award in 1982, when he finished fifth in the Heisman Trophy voting. The two-time All-American was chosen as the Big Eight Offensive Player of the Year as a junior, making him the only interior lineman ever to be so honored. Fittingly, the award for best college football center bears his name.

20. O.J. SIMPSON
RB, USC, 1967-68
In his two seasons at USC, Simpson rushed for 3,423 yards, averaging 5.1 yards per carry and running for 36 touchdowns. He rushed for 1,880 yards and 23 scores in his Heisman year of 1968. An unmatched combination of fluid grace and determination, Simpson was a unanimous All-American both of his years in the cardinal and gold. During his brief college career, he set 19 school, Pac-8 and NCAA records.

21. DERRICK THOMAS
LB, Alabama, 1985-88
In 1988, the unblockable Thomas compiled a staggering 27 sacks. His career total was an equally imposing 52. As a senior, Thomas became the first SEC player to win the Butkus Award as the nation's top linebacker. Tragically, Thomas, one of the greatest linebackers in history, died in 2000 from complications brought on by an automobile accident.

22. RANDY MOSS
WR, Marshall, 1996-97
It took the mercurial Moss a while to land at Marshall thanks to disciplinary issues, but he was worth the wait for the Herd, posting two of the greatest receiving seasons in college football history. He scored at least one TD in all 28 of his college games, finishing with 174 catches for 3,529 yards and 54 scores. He was fourth in the Heisman balloting in 1997.

23. LARRY FITZGERALD
WR, Pittsburgh, 2002-03
Fitzgerald wasn't quite as physically gifted as Moss, but he was almost as productive in two seasons for the Panthers. In 26 games, Fitz caught 161 passes for 2,677 yards and a school-record 34 touchdowns. He caught at least one TD pass in an NCAA-Division-I record 18 straight games. He was the 2003 Biletnikoff winner and runner-up in the Heisman Trophy balloting.


RANDY MOSS

Moss: AP; Pace, Newton: Athlon Sports Archives

24. JOHNNY RODGERS
WB, Nebraska, 1970-72
The Jet became the top pass receiver and kick returner in Big Eight history, setting 41 school records and four NCAA records for Cornhusker teams that were a combined 33–2–2 and won two national championships. Rodgers' most famous play was one of the great moments in college football history — a 72-yard punt return to begin the scoring in the 1971 "Game of the Century" at Oklahoma. He would win the Heisman Trophy the following year.

25. KENNY EASLEY
S, UCLA, 1977-80
One of the most decorated defenders in college football history, Easley became the first player to earn first-team All-Pac 10 honors four consecutive years. He was a three-time consensus first-team All-American (1978, '79, '80) and finished his career with a school-record 19 interceptions and 324 tackles. He was ninth in Heisman voting in 1980.

26. ANTHONY MUÑOZ
OL, USC, 1976-79
Muñoz was the prototypical offensive lineman who showed that big men could be agile as well as dominating. A two-time All-American, Muñoz was also talented enough to have pitched for the Trojans' national championship baseball team in 1978. Knee injuries proved to be a problem for Muñoz while at USC, but they did not keep him from having a Hall of Fame NFL career.

27. MARCUS ALLEN
RB, USC, 1979-81
Allen, USC's fourth Heisman Trophy winner, became the first college back ever to crack the 2,000-yard rushing mark for the regular season, rushing for 2,342 yards in his 1981 Heisman campaign and setting new NCAA marks with 212.9 rushing yards per game and five consecutive 200-yard games. During his days in cardinal and gold, Allen broke 14 NCAA records and tied two others.



CAM NEWTON

28. LAWRENCE TAYLOR
LB, North Carolina, 1977-80
At the time, Chapel Hill was a rather remote college football outpost in the basketball-mad ACC, but LT helped establish Tar Heel football during a dominant college career. Taylor, who didn't start playing football until his junior year of high school, was a terrifying combination of size, speed and aggression. In 1980, Taylor posted 16 sacks and was an All-American and ACC Player of the Year before going on to redefine the outside linebacker position in the NFL.

29. JACK TATUM
DB, Ohio State, 1968-70
Tatum, who went on to star for the Raiders, was one of the most feared hitters in football history. A key member of Ohio State's great teams from 1968 through 1970, Tatum twice was named an All-American and was the national Defensive Player of the Year as a senior. Perhaps more meaningful to him, however, was being voted one of four captains on Ohio State's All-Century Team in 2000.

30. CAM NEWTON
QB, Auburn, 2010
Newton spent only one year on The Plains after an ill-fated stint at Florida and a year in junior college, but it was one of the greatest single seasons by a quarterback in college football history. In leading Auburn to the 2010 national title, Newton completed 185-of-280 passes (66.1 percent) for 2,854 yards and 30 touchdowns and rushed for 1,473 yards and 20 touchdowns to earn the Heisman Trophy by a landslide margin.

31. STEVE EMTMAN
DE, Washington, 1989-91
Emtman was the cornerstone of one of the great teams of the modern era, the undefeated 1991 Washington Huskies, who shared the national championship with Miami. That season, Emtman won the Outland Trophy, Lombardi Award and Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year Award and finished fourth in the Heisman voting after posting 20.5 tackles for a loss on the season. He was the first overall pick in the 1992 NFL Draft but saw his pro career cut short by injuries.

32. BRIAN BOSWORTH
LB, Oklahoma, 1984-86
The flamboyant sideshow sometimes hid the substance: Brian Bosworth was one of the best linebackers in OU history. A two-time winner of the Butkus Award, Bosworth was a devastating defender. He led OU in tackles in each of his three seasons — tallying 133, 144 and 136 tackles. He

helped lead the Sooners to the national championship in 1985 and was even an academic All-American in '86.

33. JOHN ELWAY

QB, Stanford, 1979-82

As was the case for much of his pro career, Elway was a virtual one-man show on some Cardinal teams that lacked overall talent. Although he never was able to lead his team to a bowl game — due in part to The Play in the 1982 Cal game — Elway threw for 9,349 career yards and 77 touchdowns and led the nation in TD passes in 1982 with 24. He finished his career with nearly every Stanford and Pac-10 passing and total offense record.

34. ED REED

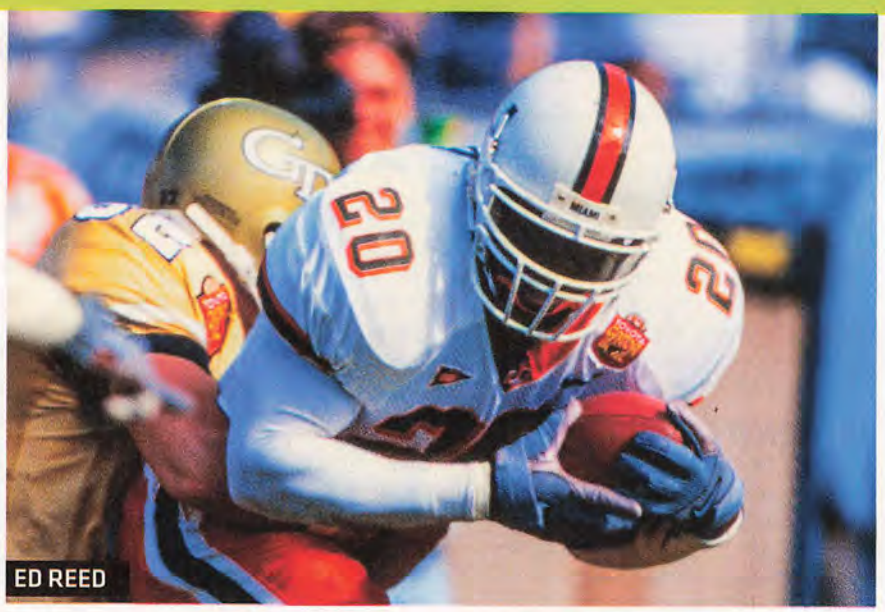
S, Miami, 1998-2001

Reed anchored the back end of some of the most talented defenses of the modern era. He holds Miami records for interceptions (21), interception return yards (389) and return touchdowns (five). He also blocked four punts, had 288 tackles, forced four fumbles and defended 52 passes during his career. He had nine interceptions for the 2001 national champions, one of history's greatest teams.

35. JERRY RICE

WR, Mississippi Valley State, 1981-84

Tiny Itta Bena, Miss., was the college home of the GOAT, who teamed up with the other half of the Satellite Express, QB Willie "Satellite" Totten, to post otherworldly numbers at MVSU. Rice set NCAA marks for receptions (102) and receiving yards (1,450) as a junior, and then topped himself as a senior with 112 catches, 1,845 receiving yards and 27 TDs. He finished his career with 301 catches for 4,693 yards and 50 touchdowns.



ED REED

36. ARCHIE MANNING

QB, Ole Miss, 1968-70

Before siring two great NFL quarterbacks, Archie was an Ole Miss legend who passed for 4,753 yards, rushed for 823 more and accounted for 56 touchdowns in an era when those numbers were extraordinary. He secured his legend in a 33–32 loss to Alabama in 1969, when he passed for 436 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for 104 yards in a losing effort.

37. RICKY WILLIAMS

RB, Texas, 1995-98

Williams broke Earl Campbell's school freshman rushing record with 990 yards, and he was off and running. Williams was a two-time All-American and the first two-time winner of the Doak Walker Award (1997 and '98). In his senior year, he rushed for a school single-season record 2,124 yards and earned the Heisman Trophy along with the Maxwell Award and AP Player of the Year and Walter Camp Player of the Year honors.

38. MATT LEINART

QB, USC, 2003-05

Leinart won the Heisman as a junior, when he completed 65 percent of his passes for 3,322 yards and 33 touchdowns with only six interceptions. Over his three-year career as a starter, he completed 65 percent of his tosses for 10,693 yards and a school-record 99 touchdowns, and was a two-time first-team All-American. With Leinart calling signals, the Trojans went 37–2 with a 34-game winning streak, three Pac-10 titles and two national titles.

39. MIKE SINGLETARY

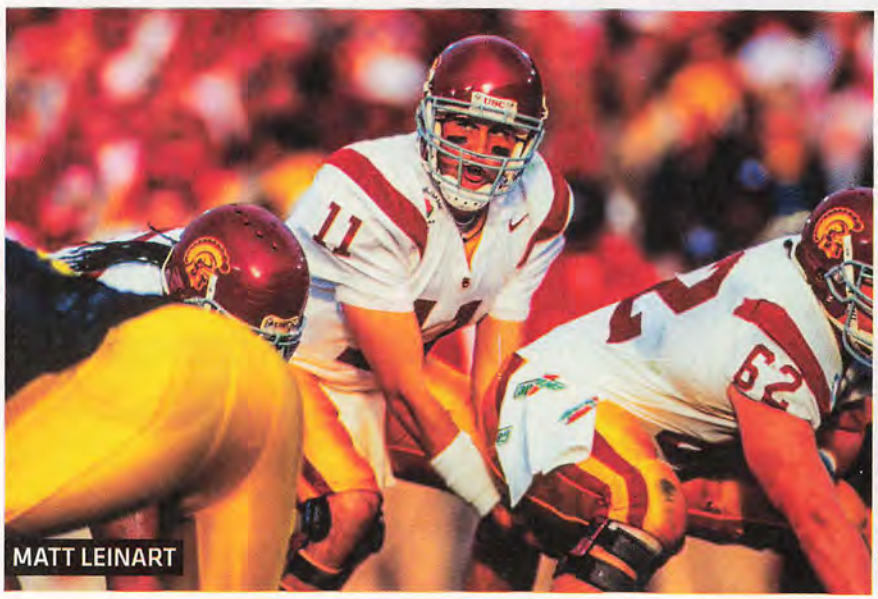
LB, Baylor, 1977-80

A player of matchless intensity, Singletary was a tackle machine for the Bears, who attained an unprecedented level of success during his time in Waco. He had 97 tackles as a freshman, a school-record 232 as a sophomore (including 35 in a game against Houston), 188 as a junior and 145 as a senior, when the Bears won 10 games and a Cotton Bowl berth. He was an All-American as a junior and senior.

40. RANDY WHITE

DL, Maryland, 1971-74

The Manster — part man, part monster — terrorized ACC offenses before embarking on a Hall of Fame pro career. Starting his career as a fullback, White moved to defense as a sophomore and became one of the best linemen in the country thanks to speed that matched that of some running backs. As a senior, White won the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award and was the ACC Player of the Year.



MATT LEINART

Athlon Sports Archives

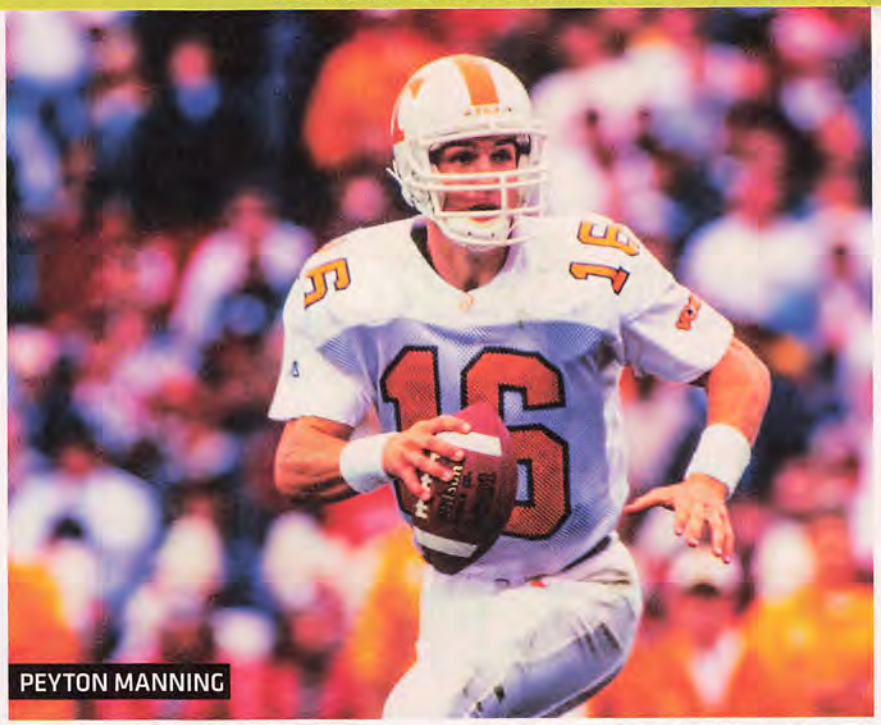
41. BRUCE SMITH
DE, Virginia Tech, 1981-84
Smith was an unblockable sack machine for the Hokies, amassing 46 career sacks, including a nation-leading 22 as a junior. He was a first-team All-American in 1983 and '84 and won the 1984 Outland Trophy. He also had 71 tackles behind the line of scrimmage for 504 yards in losses. The No. 1 overall pick of the 1985 NFL Draft, Smith had a Hall of Fame career for the Bills and Redskins and is the NFL's all-time sack leader with 200.

42. JONATHAN OGDEN
OT, UCLA, 1992-95
Ogden was a perfect combination of size (6'9", 345) and athleticism for the all-important left tackle position, which he played in textbook fashion at both the college and pro levels. In 23 games as a junior and senior, Ogden allowed only two sacks. In 1995, he earned unanimous first-team All-America honors along with the Outland Trophy and UPI Lineman of the Year award. He was also an NCAA champion in the shot put.

43. REGGIE WHITE
DT, Tennessee, 1980-83
The Minister of Defense is better known for his Hall of Fame pro career, but he also had a dominant college career spent terrorizing SEC quarterbacks and running backs. White holds the school record for sacks in a single season with 15 in 1983 and only recently saw his school career sack record broken by Derek Barnett. White was the SEC Player of the Year and an All-American in '83.

44. CHRIS SPIELMAN
LB, Ohio State, 1984-87
Maniacally intense, Spielman finished his career as Ohio State's all-time leader with 283 solo tackles overall and 105 solo stops in a season (1986), and also tied a school record with 29 tackles in the 1986 Michigan game. A three-time All-Big Ten choice and two-time All-American, the Massillon native was a cult hero in Ohio and appeared on a Wheaties box as a high schooler.

45. PEYTON MANNING
QB, Tennessee, 1994-97
Manning finished his career having rewritten the school passing record book and extensively edited the SEC record book. He left Knoxville in possession of conference marks for career wins as a starter, completions, completion percentage, passing yards and total offense, among others. He won the 1997 Davey O'Brien and Johnny Unitas Golden Arm awards, and was the SEC Player of the Year and a unanimous All-American.


PEYTON MANNING

46. KEITH JACKSON
TE, Oklahoma, 1984-87
Despite playing in a run-first (and run-second) offense, Jackson found a niche as a big-play threat. In 1986, OU attempted 7.3 passes per game, and in 1987, 8.3 passes per game — and Jackson was an All-American both years. In OU's win over Penn State in the 1986 Orange Bowl — which gave the Sooners the national championship — Jackson caught a 71-yard touchdown pass.

47. MARCUS MARIOTA
QB, Oregon, 2012-14
Mariota was a remarkably prolific quarterback in his three seasons in the high-powered Quack Attack. Among his countless statistical milestones: 10,796 career yards passing and 105 TDs to go with 2,237 yards rushing and 29 more TDs in only three seasons, with a win-loss record of 36–5. In his Heisman campaign of 2014, Mariota posted this phenomenal stat line: 4,454 yards passing, 68.3 percent completion percentage, 42 TD passes with only four interceptions, 770 rushing yards and 15 rushing scores.

48. DANNY WUERFFEL
QB, Florida, 1993-96
Wuerffel and Florida coach Steve Spurrier were a match made in Fun 'n' Gun heaven. Wuerffel ran Spurrier's offense to perfection in leading the Gators to their first-ever national title and winning the school its first Heisman since Spurrier's in 1967. Wuerffel finished his college career having completed 708 of 1,170 passes for 10,875 yards with 114 touchdown passes. His career pass efficiency rating of 163.56 was the best in major college history at the time, and his percentage of passes that went for TDs (9.74) also ranked first.

49. DOUG FLUTIE
QB, Boston College, 1981-84
The diminutive Flutie became an American folk hero during his 1984 Heisman Trophy season, a campaign that saw Flutie throw for 3,454 yards and 27 touchdowns — the most notable being the famous "Hail Flutie" pass that beat Miami 47–45. Flutie left BC as college football's all-time passing yardage leader with 10,579 (since broken). The subsequent surge in applications to BC after his Heisman season signaled a phenomenon that became known as the "Flutie effect," showing the power of college sports in building a school's reputation.

50. DESMOND HOWARD
WR/KR, Michigan, 1989-91
Howard was the most electrifying player in college football in his day. He was the first receiver ever to lead the Big Ten in scoring, amassing a nation-leading 23 total touchdowns during his Heisman-winning season, and he set a handful of NCAA records in the process. In 1991, he received more first-place Heisman votes than anyone else before him, and he also captured the Walter Camp and Maxwell awards.

Note: The NCAA did not count bowl games toward official statistics until the 2002 season. Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics listed are the official NCAA numbers.

THE 50 MOST SIGNIFICANT COLLEGE FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE LAST 50 YEARS

The Athlon Sports era began with the publication of our first SEC preview magazine in 1967, and the intervening half-century has brought so many seismic shifts to the college football landscape that we wonder if our founder, Jerry McCoin, would even recognize the sport that inspired him to launch a company. In honor of our golden anniversary, here are the 50 most impactful changes, innovations and outright breakthroughs to hit college football in the last 50 years.

Ranking by Athlon Sports //// Text by Michael Bradley

ESPN; ESPN; Mirandi; Alabama Athletics

1. ESPN



It was every sports fan's dream: A 24-hour channel devoted entirely to sports. Three-minute local TV reports and newspaper accounts would no longer dominate the distribution of athletic news. ESPN would change all of that. On Sept. 7, 1979, Bill Rasmussen bought some satellite time, set up headquarters in Bristol, Conn., and aired the first-ever SportsCenter.

College sports would never be the same.

The first big step the network took was to acquire rights to the NCAA basketball tournament's early-round games in 1980. Four years later, thanks to the Supreme Court's decision that broke up the NCAA's monopoly on deciding who could broadcast college football games and how many were allowed to air, ESPN made a big move into the sport.

Since that time, ESPN has become the undisputed heavyweight college football champ. Its inventory of college games across all conferences — and multiple channels — together with its pre- and post-game programming, recruiting coverage and spring football attention dwarfed what other networks were able to air. ESPN's alignment with ABC Sports under the Disney umbrella gave it even more authority, as well as a national outlet for programming.

The network's financial resources, multiple platforms and mighty promotional ability made ESPN synonymous with college football. Its ability to lock up long-term deals with major conferences will allow it to hold on to that distinction for years to come.

2. Scholarship Limits

In the old days, big college programs would bring in as many freshmen as they could, stage a two-week training camp and keep the ones they wanted. There were no limits, no rules and no excuses.

In 1972, Title IX changed that. The federal regulation, which mandated that schools receiving federal money — in other words, practically all of them — had to offer equal opportunities to male and female students, forced the NCAA to impose a 105-person limit on rosters. In 1978, that number dropped to 95, and 14 years later it fell to 85, today's limit. Because schools now had caps on the number of freshmen they could import, more programs had more access to more players. Teams that had previously been unable to dream of competing with the best in their conferences now had the opportunity to gain ground. Further, women's athletic programs, which had been afterthoughts before Title IX, became far more robust as colleges devoted more resources to them in an attempt to comply with the federal mandate.

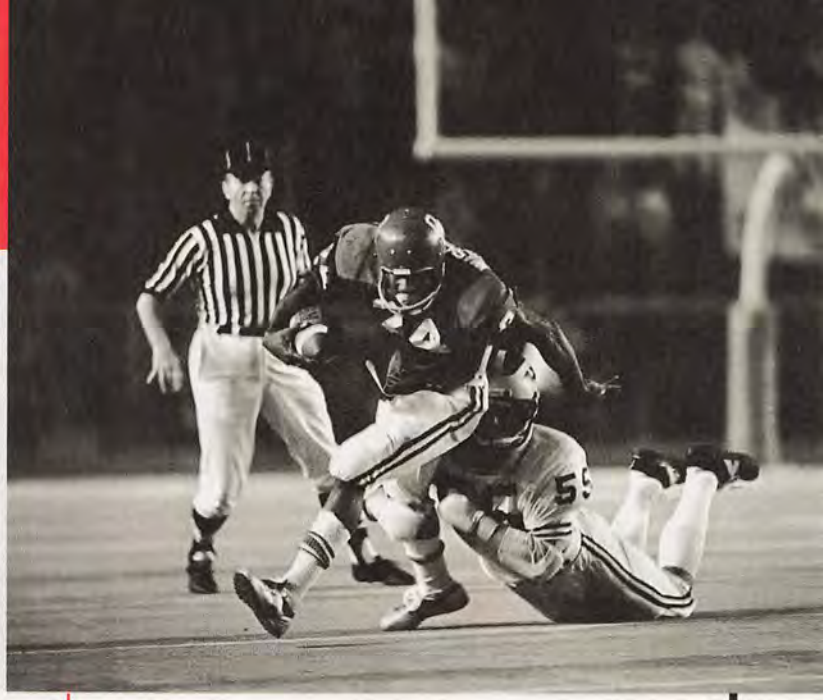


3. INTEGRATION OF THE SEC

Kentucky football wasn't any good in the late 1960s, so it's something of a footnote that defensive end Nat Worthington broke the color barrier for SEC football, seeing time for UK in its 1967 opener against Indiana. One week later, Worthington's three minutes on the field — he re-injured the shoulder he had dislocated the week prior — against Ole Miss marked the first integrated SEC game.

Tennessee, Auburn, Florida, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt all had African-Americans on their rosters before **John Mitchell** made an appearance for Alabama in a 1971 game at USC. But since Bama was a bigger name, Bear Bryant gets the credit for being the league's integration pioneer. Once Alabama added black players to its roster, the rest of the SEC followed, and the conference's course was changed forever. Instead of having the best African-American athletes leaving southern states to play at big-time schools up north or at historically black colleges, they went to the SEC. From 1936-70, four different SEC schools won five national titles. From 1971 on, six SEC members have captured 15 national crowns.

4. FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY



When Jack Mildren came to Oklahoma in 1968, he wasn't allowed to play for the Sooners, even though the Texas high school star's recruitment had been big enough to be the subject of a *Sports Illustrated* article. No freshmen were eligible back then, so Mildren and his fellow newcomers played Monday nights for the Boomers, OU's team of first-year players.

In 1972, the NCAA made freshman football players eligible. That year, running back **Joe Washington** was among the impact newcomers able to play. The reason for the switch was simple: It was getting too expensive to maintain teams like the Boomers. Those who asserted that freshmen needed a year to acclimate were overruled by those looking to trim the budget — and get the Jack Mildrens and Joe Washingtons of the world on the field faster.

5. End of Monopoly

For just about as long as television brought college football into America's living rooms, fans were beholden to the NCAA's decisions regarding which networks could carry which games. From 1965-81, ABC was the sole outlet for Saturday's heroes, and any school or conference with the temerity to negotiate its own deal was considered a member in "bad standing." So, the schools obeyed, and fans were left to watch a game or two every weekend.

That changed in 1984, when thanks to a suit brought by Oklahoma and Georgia, the Supreme Court ruled that the NCAA practice violated the Sherman Antitrust Act that prohibited monopolies. The decision freed schools from the NCAA negotiating yoke and led to the establishment of the College Football Association and deals with other networks to broadcast games. Soon, a small menu would become a smorgasbord of TV options for fans.

7. Overtime

When the SEC announced in 1992 that its conference title game — the first ever in FBS history — would go to overtime if the teams were tied in regulation, many fans braced for what they thought would be a first. In reality, OT had been part of the college landscape for 16 years, dating back to the D-III playoff game between Buena Vista and Carroll. Divisions I-AA, II and III ended tie games in 1981, but it wasn't until the '95 bowl season that the big boys joined the fun. That was an experiment. In 1996, it became the law of the land. Many have expressed dissatisfaction with the format, which gives each team a chance to score from the 25-yard line. But the system manufactured considerable excitement and strategic questions, which were enhanced when the NCAA instituted a rule in 1997 that forced teams to go for two points after TDs in the third overtime.



6. COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

For decades, fans had been dreaming about an actual college football playoff that would end the debates and establish a definitive national champion. After years of bowl selection shenanigans and the nightmare that was the BCS, the dream became a reality in 2014 with the establishment of a four-team "tournament" with participants chosen by a 13-person selection committee.

Of course, it wasn't perfect. Many people wanted at least eight teams. That way, all of the Power 5 conference champions could be included, along with a few at-large schools. But once the final game was completed, there was no arguing, no poll splits and no complaining. College football had a singular winner. At last.

Washington: AP; Ohio State: Layne Murdoch; SEC Expansion: South Carolina Media Relations; Penn State: Athlon Archives

8. Recruiting Websites

The information used to come in slowly, like dispatches from far-off lands. Fans had to wait until Signing Day to be sure who they had.

Around the turn of the century, websites sprang up to cover the recruiting world and give fans information on what prospects their favorite schools were pursuing and what chance they had of landing them. Recruiting sites tell fans and coaches what top prep players are thinking. How was that campus visit last weekend, Bubba? "I loved the ice cream in the cafeteria." What schools are in your top five, Ace? "Alabama has just replaced Tennessee." Since coaches can't comment on players they are recruiting, and local newspapers don't have the resources to chase down every local player and provide weekly updates on his preferences, these sites have filled the need.

9. Spread Offenses

It's hard to pinpoint the specific inventor of the spread-'em-out attacks that enjoy so much favor today. Some credit Rusty Russell, who in 1927 as the head coach of the Masonic Home and School for Orphaned Boys in Fort Worth, Texas, deployed an attack that spread his undersized charges across the field. TCU coach Dutch Meyer wrote a book about the spread — his version was a double-wing set-up — that influenced future coaches like Don Coryell and Mouse Davis. But when it comes to the modern, one-back "basketball on grass" scheme, credit belongs to California high school legend Jack Neumeier, who pioneered the attack in the early '70s.

Today, teams across the nation hope to outflank defenses by making them defend the entire field. Offenses try to create mismatches, employ tempo to create confusion and fatigue and value skill players over everything. The results have been more passes, more points and fatter stat lines than ever before, while allowing less talented teams to compete.



10. SEC EXPANSION

Find somebody who remembers the old Southwest Conference wistfully and ask how he feels about Arkansas. Prepare for a fusillade.

Had the Hogs not decided to bolt the SWC back in the summer of 1990, the venerable league might have stuck together, at least for a little longer than it did. Once the only non-Texas school left, the Southwest Conference was doomed — and the SEC was on its way to undisputed top dog status. The SEC decided to expand in May 1990, just about the time Penn State was surrendering its independent status to join the Big Ten. Instead of adding one school, the SEC wanted to bring aboard two, so that its expanded footprint would be more attractive to advertisers and TV executives, and it would be able to stage a lucrative conference title game, per a little-known NCAA regulation.

Finding a partner for **Arkansas** wasn't easy. Neither Texas nor Texas A&M was interested. Florida State — also an Independent at the time — chose the ACC, in part due to its animosity toward SEC member Florida. Miami went the Big East route to help its basketball program. That left **South Carolina**, which was so eager to become a member that it voted preemptively to accept an invitation, which came in late September. For the 1992 season, the SEC consisted of 12 teams, changing the college football landscape forever.



11. BIGGER TEN

Penn State coach Joe Paterno tried to create a conference comprised of Independent schools in the East, but the Big East's rise as an elite college basketball league ended that dream, and the Nittany Lions remained Independent on the gridiron until the late 1980s. That's when the school began negotiations with the Big Ten. In late '89, the two sides agreed that PSU would join, a move that was made official in early 1990. Penn State began playing Big Ten football in 1993, and the move triggered 20-plus years of a spinning national realignment carousel that didn't stop until 2014, when Rutgers and Maryland officially started play in the Big Ten.

12. Targeting

As the 21st Century dawned, the game faced a crisis, thanks to mounting evidence that linked head trauma with significant future issues, such as dementia, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and Alzheimer's disease. After significant debate — and some denial — protocols were established to protect those who had suffered concussions, both in the form of treatment guidelines and on-field regulations.

The biggest came in 2013, when the targeting rule was instituted. Its goal was to eliminate the type of hits that caused head injury, whether the excessive contact was intentional or not. In addition to a 15-yard penalty, the targeting foul included an ejection. If the player were kicked out in the second half, he would have to sit out the first half of the next game. There was criticism, but player safety became more important as a result.

13. Instant Replay

If you dislike instant replay, you can thank the controversy at the end of the 2001 Michigan-Michigan State game for the whole mess. Had there not been outrage over what Wolverine fans thought were clock shenanigans that allowed the Spartans one final play, the Big Ten wouldn't have begun investigating the concept of replay, which the NFL had begun in 1986.

The conference began using it on an experimental basis in 2004. The next year, all but two FBS conferences employed it.

14. Film Study

The image of a coach sitting in a darkened room running grainy, black-and-white game film back and forth is as much a part of college football lore as marching bands and mascots. And over the past 20 years, technology has provided ever-increasing convenience and versatility to the video aspect of preparation. Coaches can have a full game video downloaded onto their computers before they leave the stadium. Thanks to software programs, they can access any possible combination of plays and situations. Teams can provide players with position-specific packages that they can watch on computers and tablets. Americans may spend too much time in front of screens, but for college football, more is definitely better.

15. THE BCS



There have been worse ideas throughout the history of college football than the BCS — but there haven't been many.

What began in 1992 as the Bowl Coalition morphed into the Bowl Alliance before beginning life in 1998 as the much-reviled Bowl Championship Series. A combination of polls and computer rankings was used to pit the top two teams in the country against each other. That goal was accomplished several times, but there were seasons when disaster reigned.

In 2001, Colorado hammered Nebraska, 62–36, in the regular-season finale, but the Cornhuskers went to the BCS title game ahead of the Buffaloes — and were ripped by Miami. Two years later, Oklahoma earned a BCS berth, even though it had been blown out by Kansas State in the Big 12 title game.

The BCS died in 2014, when the College Football Playoff was created, thereby ending an inherently flawed system and a national punchline.

16. HURRY-UP OFFENSE



When Fielding "Hurry Up" Yost's 1902 Michigan team would end a play, quarterback Boss Weeks would call out signals for the next play while still under the pile. The Wolverines outscored opponents 644–12 and won their second straight national title. What John Heisman had started at Auburn in the 1890s — offense at a frenetic pace — had evolved.

In the early 1990s, **Hal Mumme** introduced a fast-paced, no-huddle attack at Iowa Wesleyan, helped by assistant Mike Leach. Mumme took his attack to Kentucky, and his ideas and disciples spread out all over America. Today, teams attack at breakneck paces, trying to tire out defenses and create mismatches that lead to quick scores and as many plays as possible.

Oklahoma, Alabama: AP; UK: Athlon Archives

17. Big Ten Network

ESPN's inability in 2004 to reach an agreement over rights fees with the Big Ten led the conference to seek its own outlet for programming. The league turned to Fox to create a network to broadcast some of its games and promote its members.

In late August 2007 — a year after the Mountain West created the mtn. — the Big Ten Network was launched as a joint venture between the conference, which owned 49 percent of the channel, and Fox. Thanks to favorable distribution agreements, BTN gained a strong footing almost immediately, and other leagues developed an immediate case of network envy.

18. The Wishbone

When Texas went 0–1–1 in its first two games running Emory Bellard's newfangled offense, many felt the gimmick would die a quick and quiet death. Thirty Longhorn wins later, the Wishbone was rolling along. Before long, many of America's top teams — including Oklahoma and Alabama — were unleashing squadrons of backs on overmatched rivals and rolling up the yards, points and wins. Texas won the 1969 national championship and went undefeated the following regular season. Oklahoma won three national titles (1974, '75, '85) using the offense, and Alabama won back-to-back titles (1978-79) unleashing a passel of backs out of the formation.

19. Facility Arms Race

Back in 1980, Michigan coach Bo Schembechler was tired of having to take his teams to California — and any other bowl destination — early, just so his team could get away from nasty winter weather. So, U-M constructed the first indoor practice facility.

More than 35 years later, that simple, carpeted shed has spawned a facilities arms race that has touched every FBS team, not to mention plenty of FCS schools, too. Each year, a new gold standard opens, with player comforts that seem decadent. The new, $55 million Clemson building has a nap room, a barbershop, a bowling alley, putt-putt, an arcade and a fun slide. It isn't quite as opulent as Oregon's $68 million, 145,000-square-foot showpiece, but it should give the Tigers quite a recruiting advantage — at least until the next school builds a facility that includes a skydiving simulator.

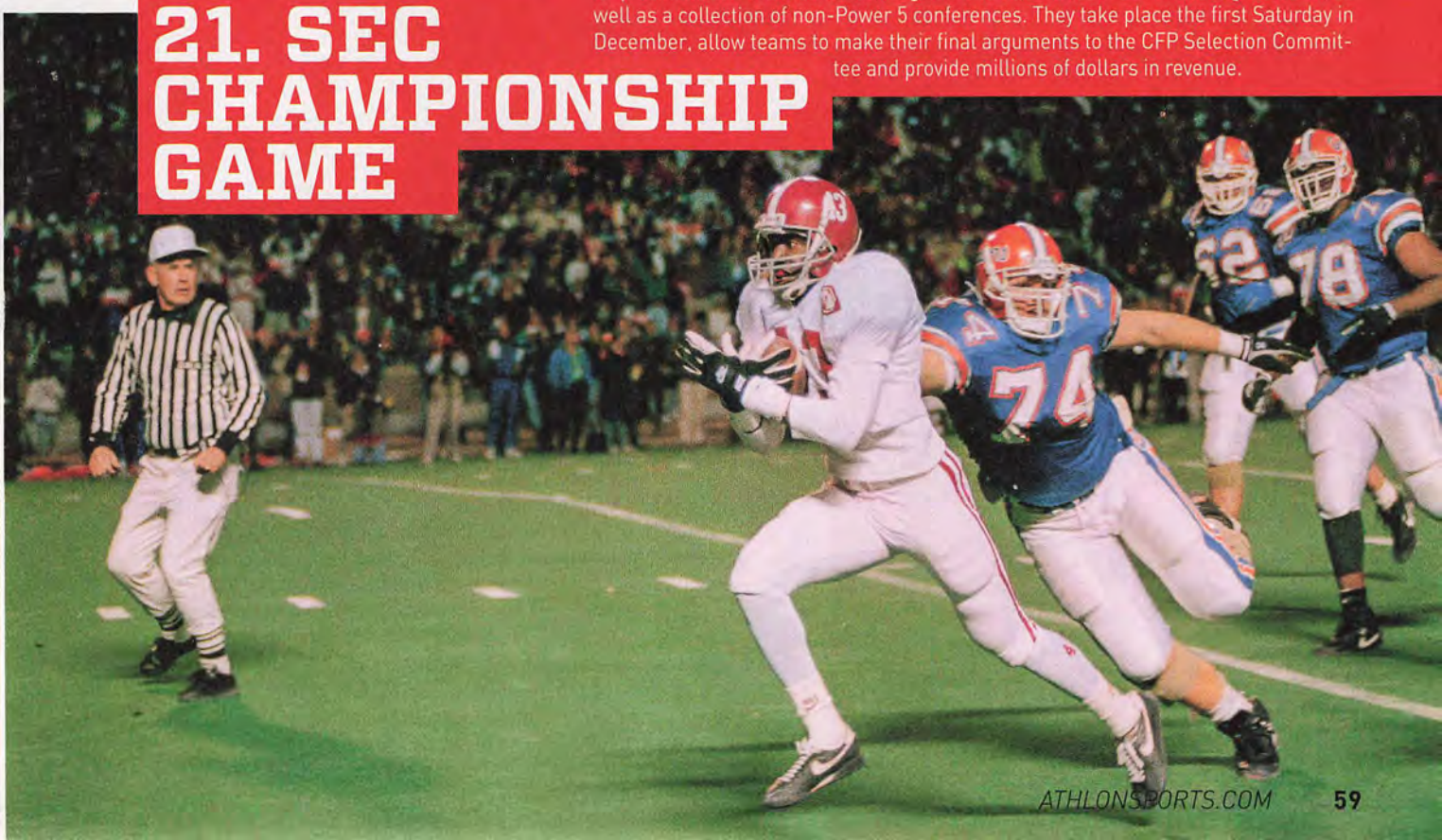
20. Three and Out

Until 1990, players had to spend four years on campus or be that long removed from high school graduation before they could apply for a spot in the NFL Draft. In '90, that changed. All of a sudden, juniors, or redshirt sophomores, were allowed to join the fun. Players liked it, because it brought them a year closer to getting paid — provided they were selected — although some still wished they could go even earlier. Coaches weren't thrilled by it, because top talent was leaving a year early. And fans were devastated when the best of the best moved on a year (or two) early. Lawsuits have been filed to allow players even earlier access to the NFL, but none has succeeded. Other models have been floated, but none has gained enough support to pass. The compromise doesn't have anybody entirely happy, but it still seems to have worked out pretty well.

21. SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

It made perfect sense. Once the SEC divided itself into two divisions following the 1992 additions of Arkansas and South Carolina, its leadership wanted to choose its champion with a stand-alone title game that would generate big interest — and bigger profits. In 1992, the league staged the first-ever conference championship game, with **West winner Alabama beating East champ Florida**, 28–21, at Legion Field in Birmingham. Florida gained revenge the next year, again at Legion Field. Since then, the game has been staged at the Georgia Dome and will move next door to Mercedes-Benz Stadium in 2017.

The SEC's game helped fuel other conference expansion and eventual championship contests for the ACC (2005), Big Ten and Pac-12 (both 2011) and Big 12 (2017) as well as a collection of non-Power 5 conferences. They take place the first Saturday in December, allow teams to make their final arguments to the CFP Selection Committee and provide millions of dollars in revenue.



22. Let Them Text!

During its existence, the NCAA has proven itself to be out of touch on a wide variety of topics, but its nine-year ban (2007-16) on college coaches' ability to text recruits was one of its most shortsighted moves.

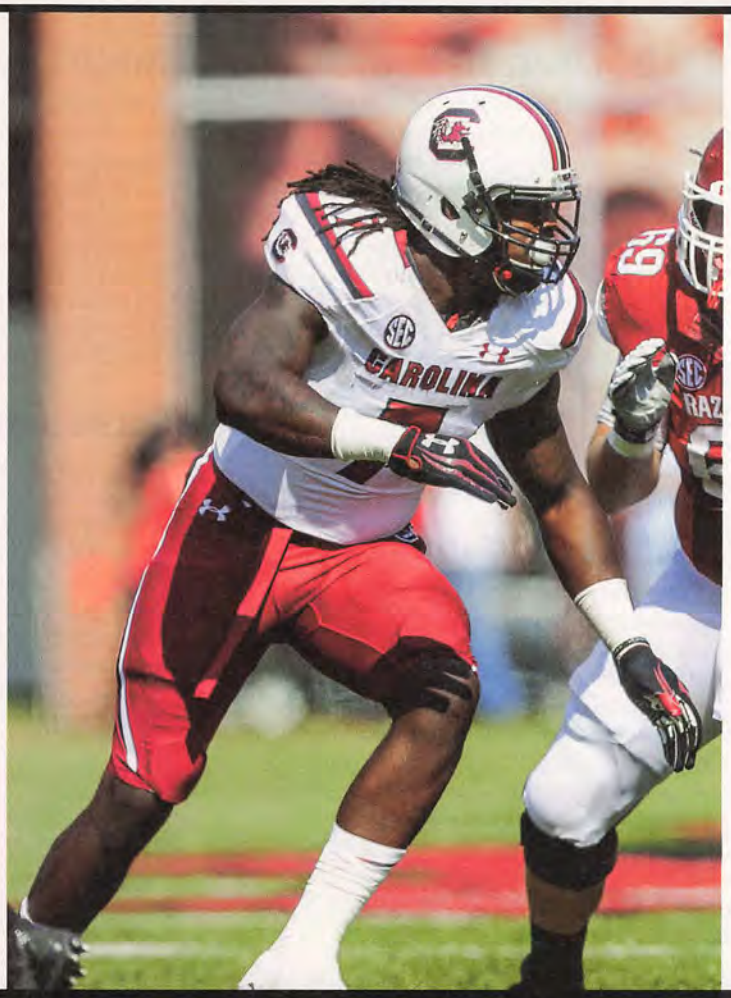
The text message is the preferred means of contact for teenagers, and eliminating the ability for coaches to connect with prospects through the players' most natural communication method didn't make a lot of sense. So, in April 2016, the NCAA made legal what it had been allowing other sports to do for several years: permit football coaches to text recruits. Some coaches were thrilled with the ability to increase contact. Others weren't so happy. And the players?

At least they don't have to talk to anyone.

23. Hudl Up

The days of Billy Bob and Bubba having to send samples of their on-field work through the mail to college coaches hit life support back in 2006, when three Nebraska grads created Hudl. Now used by thousands of teams in 18 sports, it is best known as a video highlight aggregator that allows recruiters to view footage of prospects without heading to their mailboxes.

Instead of waiting for CDs to arrive or having to drive all over to see every potential recruit, coaches log onto a player's Hudl account, watch some highlights and decide if he can help old State U win some games. Hudl also helps coaches in game preparation and player development, but college coaches love it because it brings the action directly to them, with no postage due.



24. BIGGER, FASTER, STRONGER

In the mid-1990s, college football was obsessed with speed, so much so that teams were taking safeties and making them linebackers and turning linebackers into ends, creating speedy units to out-maneuver even the most sophisticated attack.

Speed remains a coveted trait in all players, but coaches now want players who are both big and fast. And strong. The increased sophistication of training and nutritional approaches, not to mention the idea that sleep is actually a good thing, has allowed players to incorporate all three characteristics on both sides of the ball. Linemen like **Jadeveon Clowney** have tremendous power and quickness. Backs are faster and more armored than ever. Linebackers look like marble statues and can run 4.4 40s, and the outside guys might just take flight soon.

25. 11th ... and 12th Games

When it came to the battle over whether it was a good idea to expand the number of games that a college football team could play, there was always one clear winner.

The bottom line.

In 1970, after nearly two decades of playing 10 times a year — not counting bowls — teams were in action on 11 autumn Saturdays. Thirty-six years later, that figure grew again.

Add in a potential conference title game and two possible playoff contests, and the collegians could suit up 15 times, or 50 percent more than their counterparts did in 1969.

26. Proposition 48

Proposition 48 was enacted in 1986 with the goal of creating minimum academic standards for incoming freshmen. Students had to have at least a 2.0 GPA in 11 core courses and a 700 on their SATs. Those who didn't hit both standards were ineligible to practice or play their freshman years on campus and could not receive scholarship money. Future amendments to Prop 48 upped the number of core classes and introduced a sliding scale that allowed students to have lower test scores if their GPAs were higher. The "partial qualifier" designation was introduced that allowed for students who reached either the GPA or SAT standard to receive a scholarship and practice but not compete. In 2016, the NCAA revamped the core requirements again and allowed those who didn't meet them to practice and receive aid but not compete.

Oregon: GoDucks.com; Others: Athlon Archives

27. Hashmarks Narrow

In 1993, college football proved it was just as addicted to high-octane offense as the NFL was. After more than four decades of having the field neatly divided into thirds by a set of hashmarks, the NCAA decided to push the lines in by just under seven feet per side, giving runners heading wide more room to turn, receivers a bigger area in which to operate and kickers a more direct shot at the uprights. As a result, spread formations proliferated, more points were scored, and defensive coordinators became endangered species.



28. DRESS FOR SUCCESS

When Oregon played in the 1995 Rose Bowl, the craziest thing about the team's uniforms was the presence of Donald Duck — courtesy of Disney — on the sleeve. Four years later, the Ducks and Nike founder Phil Knight began a trend that has turned college football into a game of fashion can-you-top-this. Oregon started to come up with uniforms that would appeal more to teenagers than alumni. Crazy socks, chrome helmets, "feather" designs on jerseys and all sorts of color schemes were introduced, sparking a movement throughout college football that made some schools unrecognizable.



29. THE GREENING OF NORTHWESTERN

In 1981, Northwestern was probably the worst job in all of football. But **Dennis Green** wanted the gig, becoming just the second African-American head coach in Division I-A history. (The first, Willie Jeffries, had coached at Wichita State, which stopped fielding a team after the 1986 season.)

Green's ascension at a Big Ten school broke ground and led other schools in the '80s to follow suit — although it was far from an avalanche.

30. Get On Down(field)

Until 1977, offensive linemen who left the trenches before a pass was released were penalized and ridiculed for thinking they belonged downfield.

But '77 brought change that led to a growth in the passing game. First, linemen were allowed a "half extension" of their arms in pass protection. Even more important was that linemen were allowed to be three yards downfield on screen passes, before the ball was thrown. The rule change injected some life into the aerial strategies of teams, and by the 1980s, more advancements helped build affection for the forward pass.



31. UNTIL DEATH...

As long as the NCAA has been investigating shenanigans when it comes to recruiting and maintaining eligibility of players, it has handed down probationary sentences. But in February 1987, the organization's Infractions Committee did something unprecedented. It canceled SMU's entire '87 football season. **Coach Bobby Collins'** Mustangs had already been banned from postseason play in 1985 and prohibited from playing televised games in '86. But the severity of SMU's violations warranted more than bowl bans and TV exclusion. Thus, the Death Penalty.

For more than 10 years, the Mustangs had been using a slush fund to pay recruits and reward players for good performance. And it worked. From 1980-84, SMU won 49 games and three Southwest Conference titles. But once the NCAA hammer came down, the party was over. The Mustangs didn't play in 1987 or '88, and the program was never the same.

32. Testing, Testing

It didn't exactly take an act of Congress to get the NCAA to begin testing its athletes for drugs, but a Congressional investigation sure helped. Facing questions from legislators about the role of drugs in college sports, the NCAA in 1986 announced that it would start testing participants in college bowl games and Division I-AA, II and III tournament contests.

The NCAA said it would examine samples for 90 different substances, including recreational drugs, steroids, stimulants and diuretics. In 2006, the NCAA introduced year-round testing. By then, most schools had their own programs. The message was clear: The party was over — if you got caught.

33. Fiesta Bowl: No. 1 vs. No. 2

Now that college football chooses a national champion by a tournament, rather than an election, it's hard to remember what it was like in the Old Days, when men in funny-colored jackets tried to make deals with schools to play in their bowl games.

When the 1986 regular season ended, Miami and Penn State were Nos. 1 and 2 in the polls. More important, each was an Independent and therefore not tied to any one particular postseason game due to conference affiliation. The Citrus Bowl tried to money-whip the teams into playing each other in Orlando, but the Fiesta Bowl convinced the Hurricanes and Nittany Lions to get it on in Tempe. Then, NBC stepped in and moved the game — which suddenly had more cachet than the more established Rose, Orange, Sugar and Cotton Bowls — to Jan. 2, to create a stand-alone national championship event. The move worked. More people watched the Fiesta Bowl, a 14–10 Penn State win, than any other bowl to that point.

34. TWITTER

Twitter presents the opportunity for instant news and analysis, the sharing of opinions and the opportunity for an explosion of controversy.



35. Air Raid

From 1976-94, a BYU quarterback led the nation in passing yards nine times, and in 1984, the Cougars won a national championship. LaVell Edwards wasn't running a pure Air Raid attack, but the skies above Provo were often filled with footballs.

Even Edwards might be surprised at the explosion of passing in the college ranks these days. Thanks to folks like Hal Mumme, Mike Leach and Mark Mangino, the four-wide, one-back, throw-it-almost-every-down attack has been in vogue for a couple decades. Quarterbacks call the plays at the line, identify mismatches before the snap and toss it all around to amass crazy amounts of yards and points.

36. COLLEGE GAMEDAY

Not even the most optimistic ESPN employee could have imagined in 1993 that bringing a pregame show on the road would result in a weekly autumn phenomenon. But once ESPN's College GameDay became a movable feast, its popularity began to mushroom.

The idea began in the Bristol studios in 1987. Six years later, ESPN started the live broadcasts, with the first taking place in South Bend before the '93 matchup between No. 1 Florida State and No. 2 Notre Dame. Since then, it has been a Saturday fixture at the biggest games, mixing entertainment with analysis and plenty of promotion.



Game Day: ESPN; Louisville: Andy Lyons/Getty Images; Notre Dame: Athlon Archives; Yellow Line: YouTube



37. NOTRE DAME BROADCASTING COMPANY

In 1991, it was no secret that the biggest ratings draw in college football resided in South Bend, Ind. Notre Dame had the only true national program in the country.

As TV dollars poured into established conferences, the Fighting Irish stood alone. That changed in August 1991, when NBC agreed to televise all of Notre Dame's home games, a relationship that continues today. There are those who criticize the network's homerism when it comes to airing the team — with good reason. But the deal allowed ND to maintain football independence, something that has always been very important to the school.

38. Artificial Turf

Indiana State's Memorial Stadium holds but 12,764 people and sits atop a dirt mound in Terre Haute. But in 1967, it became the first college football venue to convert its playing surface to ChemGrass, or AstroTurf. The carpet soon became ubiquitous, and artificial turf continues to be a cost-effective choice for many programs.

39. Bowl Tie-Ins

Today, each FBS conference publicizes its various bowl tie-ins that link its members to specific games and opponents from pre-selected leagues. That's how we know that representatives from the AAC and C-USA will get together in December for the Boca Raton Bowl.

The genesis for these agreements is the post-WWII pact between the Big Ten (then the Big 9) and Pac-12 (Pacific Coast Conference) that linked the leagues' champions to the Rose Bowl. Not long after, the Sugar (SEC), Cotton (SWC) and Orange (Big Eight) established relationships with conferences. Today, just about every bowl has some form of agreement, although the biggest games are tied partly to the College Football Playoff and therefore must exercise greater flexibility than does their Belk Bowl cousin.



40. THURSDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

If some is good, then more is better, right? When it comes to college football, ESPN couldn't agree more. So, in 1997, it started airing games on Thursday nights, giving fans an early start to the weekend and steering clear of Friday night high school action. Mike Tirico handled play-by-play the first nine seasons and was teamed most notably with Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit. Games often involved teams from the ACC, SEC and Big East, but many other programs participated, the better to create an on-campus event and increase national awareness. The Nov. 2, 2006, game between **Louisville** and **West Virginia** remains ESPN's highest-rated Thursday night game.



41. YELLOW FIRST DOWN LINE

There have been greater inventions throughout the history of mankind, like the printing press, the telephone and nachos, but when it comes to watching football on TV, it's tough to beat the yellow first-down line invented by Sportvision. It debuted in 1998 during a Sunday night NFL game between the Ravens and Bengals and was an immediate hit. Within a couple years, it was a standard feature on each NFL broadcast and practically every college game. Watching football on TV without it is quite maddening. And its presence has fans asking one big question: When will it be visible on the field for those actually at the game?

42. Kickoff Classic

The New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority decided that, instead of the struggling Garden State Bowl, it would hold a big preseason matchup that would fill Giants Stadium. The NCAA granted an exemption so the game would not count against the 11 games teams were permitted to play, and The Kickoff Classic was born. On Aug. 29, 1983, No. 1 Nebraska met No. 4 Penn State in the inaugural Classic. Although there were other exempt preseason contests, the New Jersey version was the big one. Once the NCAA added a 12th game in 2002, the "exempt" games were finished, but neutral-site openers between top programs live on.

43. EA SPORTS NCAA FOOTBALL

Nothing could bring the gridiron to young people better than EA Sports NCAA Football video games. Begun in 1993 as "Bill Walsh College Football" as a partner to the popular EA property "John Madden Football" (later "Madden NFL"), it allowed gamers to control teams and players, create seasons and eventually incorporate NCAA legends into the action.

EA Sports dropped Walsh in '96 and renamed the game "College Football USA 96." Two years later, it became "NCAA Football 98," the appellation it kept until 2014, when a lawsuit by former players angry at their likenesses being used without any compensation ended the fun.



44. Repeat Performance

There was no school in the Big Ten happier in 1971 that the conference dropped its egalitarian — but rather silly — no-repeat rule regarding the Rose Bowl than Ohio State. Unshackled by the elimination of the mandate, the Buckeyes played in Pasadena from '73-76 (the 1974 appearance came thanks to a 6-4 vote of Big Ten athletic directors after OSU tied Michigan, 10–10). It was only the second time since 1947 a Big Ten team had repeated at the Granddaddy. Minnesota had back-to-back appearances in 1961 and '62, because the agreements between the Big Ten and Pac-8 were in flux. And the Pac-8 ended its no-repeat practice in 1966, paving the way for USC to compile a four-game streak of Roses (1967-70) of its own.

45. Kicking the Tee

Talk to most football players, and they will tell you kickers have it easy. They don't get hit in practice, and they aren't subject to the same strength and conditioning mandates as their full-contact teammates. In 1989, the NCAA agreed that the kicking life was too soft and ruled that placements could not be attempted from a tee. In 1987, kickers were successful on 67.1 percent of all tries, including 80.2 percent from inside 40 yards, an increase of 40.6 percent and 30 percent, respectively, from '67. At first, the kickers howled. Then, they adjusted. By 2009, they made 72.9 percent of their field-goal attempts.

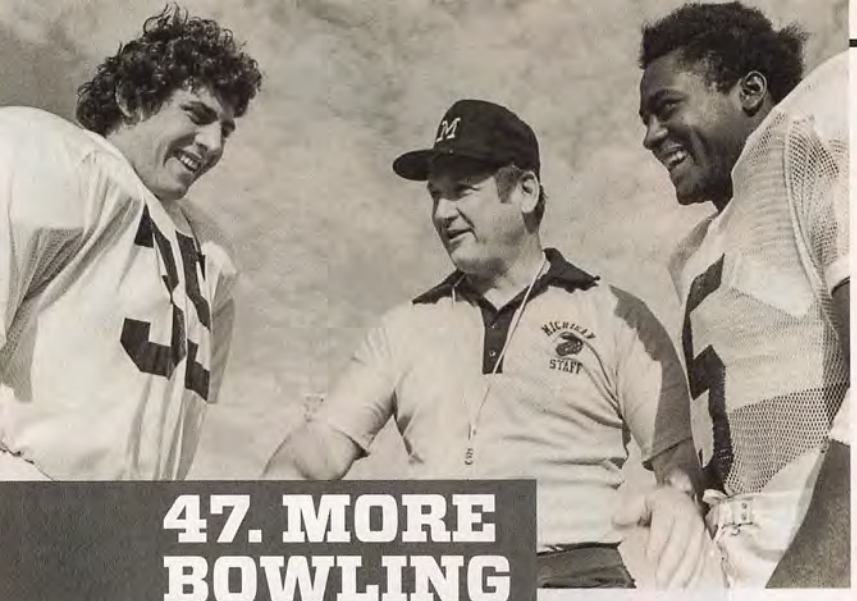


46. MACtion

Let's face it: Unless you are an alumnus of a Mid-American Conference school, you won't be tuning in to random MAC games on Saturdays throughout the season. If you live in the Midwest, you are likely to watch Big Ten contests. If you live anywhere else, you have other options.

But in 1999, the MAC realized that it could increase its national profile and satisfy the cravings of football fans starving for programming by playing televised games in November on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights. MACtion was born. It can wreak havoc for the coaches and their schedules — Northern Illinois didn't play on a Saturday in the final five weeks of the 2016 regular season — but that's the price of publicity. And while the average fan isn't going to pay too much attention to that Toledo-Eastern Michigan game, at least there is some football to watch in the middle of the week.

Gane: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Others: AP



47. MORE BOWLING

From 1972-74, Michigan won 10 games every season, finished 30–2–1, tied for the conference title all three years and played in exactly zero bowl games. The Big Ten's policy that only the conference champion could enjoy the post-season — established in 1946 — was the culprit, and the Wolverines weren't too happy about it.

In 1975, both the Big Ten and Pac-8, which at the time tied their champions to the Rose Bowl, announced that teams that didn't finish first could play in bowls. That year, Big Ten runner-up Michigan fell to Oklahoma, 14–6, in the Orange Bowl, while USC, the Pac-8 fifth-place finisher, dumped Texas A&M, 20–0, in the Liberty Bowl.

48. On the Go

The explosion of youth sports did more than create a world of participation trophy-craving kids who clogged every inch of available green space on autumn Saturdays. It also robbed college football fans of their ability to watch their favorite teams, because attending Junior's age-five soccer game at 2 p.m. was way more important than watching State play Tech.

Thanks to the growth of remote technology, the disappointment of choosing family obligations over college football was over. People could stream games on their phones, tablets and computers. And since the Internet offered a much larger platform than individual TV stations, dozens more games were available than just what was aired on the flat screen. Streaming took college football everywhere, at all times and for everybody — even youth soccer hostages.

49. Numbers Game

We all know that Clemson won the 2016 national title with a thrilling comeback win over Alabama, but if it were up to the numbers, the Tide would have taken the crystal trophy by six points — at least if you believe ESPN's team efficiency ratings. That's little solace for the Tide, but it shows just how much information is available these days for college football fans. An avalanche of advanced stats measures teams' various success and failure rates in all three phases of the game and gives folks even more information to process before Saturday's kickoff. Analytics have become part of life in the professional ranks, and they are every bit as fascinating on campus, too.

50. SMURF TURF

Talk all you want about Kentucky bluegrass, but the stuff Boise State plays on is really blue. Back in 1986, the Broncos were set to install a new artificial turf field at Albertsons Stadium, and BSU's athletic director at the time, Gene Bleymaier, was upset that no one would know the school spent $750,000 on the carpet. So, he decided to make it a distinctive color. Visitors from 37 different countries and all 50 states have checked it out, and the school isn't about to change things: In 2010, a survey revealed 90% of Boise residents love the blue turf.



COMMITMENT ISSUES

When a top prospect — like Houston native Ed Oliver — commits, is he committing to the coach or the school?

BY STEVEN GODFREY



Aaron M. Sprecher via AP

Ed Oliver could've gone to almost any college in America, at least any college with a football program.

That's the luxury afforded to 6'2", 277-pound blue-chip defensive tackles who are blessed with enough speed to break gaps and chase down skill-position players in the open field. Oliver was a consensus five-star recruit in football-frenetic Houston, Texas — but he shut down his national recruitment before it ever started.

He knew he'd be a Houston Cougar. He knew he'd play for Tom Herman and with his brother Marcus, already an offensive linemen at UH. And he also knew Herman, the superstar-in-the-making head coach, had a better than decent chance of leaving UH before Ed would become an upperclassman.

"Coming in, yeah, you obviously had to know there was at least a slim chance he might leave. But you can't fault the man for wanting to better himself," Oliver says. "And I congratulate him on wanting to do that, wanting to better himself. You're supposed to accelerate and strive for more."

With college football coaching positions at an all-time high rate of turnover and college football recruiting at an all-time high level of importance, something has to give: Coaches who are promising the world to future stars also have an eye on a job down the road.

How does a recruit cope with the coaching landscape? While they're being asked to make a semi-permanent decision on Signing Day that can't be undone without a loss of eligibility or a step down to a lower class of football, coaches are free to jump to other jobs, and athletic directors are under more pressure than ever to fire the men making lifelong promises to 17-year-olds.

To an outsider, Oliver seemed to be facing an existential crisis before Signing Day: Should he go to a major power like Texas or LSU? He loved his home city, but Herman was being rumored for jobs from Texas to South Carolina even before Oliver graduated high school.

"Man, it wasn't even about that. I made my decision and knew I'd be happy no matter what," Oliver says.

Here's how Oliver did it, and some advice for future blue chips:

When recruiters come calling, ignore the name of the coach. Study the name of the school.

"That's the biggest thing — look at the school, not the coach. That's the most important thing. That's why I picked the University of Houston. Because I couldn't see myself leaving my city. Whether Coach Herman was here or not, this was always going to be my city," Oliver says.

Oliver's recruitment came at a crucial time for Herman's development as a head coach — his first year saw a headline-making Peach Bowl win over Florida State and a conference title. Snagging Oliver, who committed May 21 and remained a strong verbal throughout the 2015 season, created even more buzz.

According to Oliver, his recruitment was misread by the national media. Outsiders might've confused this as causation, but Oliver was focused less on the rise of Herman and more on the value of UH.

"I just had it set in my head before then that I was going to play with my brother and see him graduate. And if he graduated and I didn't like the school anymore I'd go transfer," Oliver says.

"The comfort level you feel with a coach creates a comfort level with that school," says 247 Sports college football recruiting analyst Barton Simmons. "Even if you know a coach might be leaving, that doesn't change the particular way that coach helped you connect to that university. I can't imagine that Ed Oliver is shocked that he's playing for a different head coach in Year 2, but it might not matter, because throughout the recruiting process he fell in love with the message and not necessarily Tom Herman, so that now that he's gone that connection with the school remains."

Ignore the hype as much as possible.

It's more difficult than ever, but it's best for the recruit not to get caught up in the hoopla of the recruiting game. The calmer

and more private your communication with potential suitors, the more informed you'll become. And the more informed you are, the better the chance that a real relationship will develop between the coach and player. And, hopefully, the less you'll be surprised if a coach leaves.

"I definitely lived a quieter life than some other guys. I was probably the most under-recruited five-star ever. I just did what I did, played the game and let that speak," Oliver says. "If you looked at my Twitter, you wouldn't see a scholarship offer on there."

Oliver set limits early on to maintain a sense of calm during his junior and senior seasons of high school. He picked a few coaches from a few schools he had genuine interest in, and the rest of college football had a hard time finding him.

"I talked to who I wanted to talk to. My experience wasn't about having your phone blown up 24/7. There was a certain number of coaches who had my number and knew how to contact me. I had set it up to where certain coaches could talk to me and certain coaches couldn't, or they just didn't have a way to talk to me."

"The longer a kid is out playing the recruiting game at a higher level, the better the chance he buys into something false," a Power 5 head coach says. "That's not a knock on the intelligence of the student athlete, that's just probability. If you're sought after and you entertain that attention, you're going to hear more and more and more, and most of it isn't real. It's what you think you want to hear."

Share information with other recruits, or have a brother already playing college football.

Not every blue chip has a big brother already on an FBS roster, and Oliver's brother Marcus obviously influenced his decision. But it also gave Ed and his family a preview of big-time recruiting and built a network of information and connections. He also had two teammates who had been through the process — Cordel Iwuagwu (TCU) and Toby Weathersby (LSU).

"Marcus had already been through the recruiting process," Oliver says. "Cordel and Toby, those guys probably had 20 offers each. So from learning from them, it wasn't nothing for me to act like a pro when the time came."

Because recruiting cycles start earlier and earlier, prospects have years to examine the landscape of college football and potential coaching changes. Knowledge has become equity, but there's still a nagging instability.

"I can't overstate how harmful it is for recruits to even think that there's a chance I'm losing my job," one Power 5 head coach says. "Obviously that's the nature of the business and I get that, but a little bit of uncertainty amplifies 10 or 20 or a 100 fold in recruiting. Not so much by the recruits or their families, either, but by the schools recruiting against us."

"I think that kids are more cognizant than ever," Simmons says. "Kids are more educated on the process than ever and the people around them are alerting them that it's highly unlikely you'll play for the same position coach your entire collegiate career and it's possible you won't play for the same head coach. That's something kids are much more aware of."

New changes to early signing periods can trap prospects, making their decisions that much tougher.

In April, the NCAA approved a recommendation for early signing periods for college football. Although a vote to make the period official is still pending at press time, expect the rule to pass and a 72-hour window in the third week of December to open for early signings.

This new timeframe seems advantageous for programs looking to lock in signatures and reduce the cost of official campus visits in January. For players, it could exacerbate anxieties about a coaching staff either leaving for a new job or being fired.

Most major programs' firings happen earlier than the third week of December — for instance, Herman was in Austin on Nov. 26 — but the ladder of coaches in the second- and third-tier P5 jobs and below can take weeks to sort out.

"It's entirely possible in this current proposal that a kid could now sign in December at a [Group of 5] school and then his coach takes a job that suddenly opens," one head coach says. "What's even more interesting will be watching to see which coaches hold off on early signings because they're looking to jump. This could create a kind of poker tell for guys wanting to leave. At least guys who are smart enough not to sign kids and then walk out the door a day later."

Except that most prospects aren't recruited by head coaches, at least not solely. Recruiting coordinators and assistant coaches live in a state of uncertainty, but especially in December and January. Plenty of major programs, inlcuding LSU, Oregon, Tennessee and Georgia, made key staff moves after Signing Day 2017. By creating a signing window for prospects at the peak of coach-hiring season, a secondary market could emerge.

"There's no doubt that [assistant] coaches are going to try and leverage players when they're looking for jobs. If you hear a guy is getting a head job first week of December you're making calls to that guy saying, 'Hey, I've got this kid wrapped up. I've been on this kid two, three, years. You take me, and I'm bringing you this signature immediately," an SEC coordinator says.

That situation can only happen if a player has bought in with a coach, not a program. Oliver's advice: Commit — or sign — early if you're confident in the school as an overall experience. But in a system that increasingly favors one side at the negotiating table, you get only one shot as a player.

"Just stay focused and let your heart lead the way. But then after you commit shut it down. Don't play around talking to other coaches or guys going to other schools. Let your commitment be the real final word, and I promise you, your life will be easier," Oliver says. "If you're really in love with the school, nothing else should be able to sway you. I don't believe in decommitment and all that dishonesty. You put other people in a bind. You have to think about more than yourself."

"That's the biggest thing — look at the school, not the coach. That's the most important thing. That's why I picked the University of Houston. Because I couldn't see myself leaving my city. Whether Coach Herman was here or not, this was always going to be my city." — Ed Oliver

Changing the Narrative

The ACC is making a serious play for college football supremacy

BY JON SOLOMON



Clemson: AP; Richardson/McClary/Athlon Sports; Fuente: Chris Keane

A funny thing happened in college football last season: The ACC was the best conference. No, seriously.

We're only a couple years removed from a time when the ACC regularly challenged the old Big East for the label of worst major football conference. From 1998 through 2011, the ACC had a 2–13 record in BCS bowls and was a laughingstock.

But the narrative turned dramatically in 2016. It wasn't just that Clemson topped Alabama for the national title, although that certainly helped. But Clemson also routed Ohio State in the semifinals, Florida State edged Michigan at the Orange Bowl and the ACC had a combined 16–6 record vs. the SEC and Big Ten.

From 2004-13, the ACC was 30–54 vs. the SEC, which used to lord over the sport. Since 2014, the ACC is 19–13 vs. the SEC.

"I think all you media folks need to change your stories," Clemson coach Dabo Swinney says. "It sounds good. I've been in this league a long time, and this league has never gotten the respect that it deserves. But I said about five years ago or something, just keep your mouth shut and go play. If we want to change the story, then we've got to change it from the inside out."

The ACC did. Now, can a basketball-centric conference sustain football success?

"Now we just need to continue that upward trajectory of staying there, and that's hard to do," ACC commissioner John Swofford says. "But to stay there, you have to get there first. I think the narrative of ACC football has changed over the last five years, and it needed to."

The SEC still has more money than the ACC, which plans to launch a TV network with ESPN by 2019. In 2014-15, the most recent available year for tax records for both conferences, the SEC distributed about $32.7 million to schools, while the ACC paid out roughly $27 million. The SEC was up to $40.4 million per team in 2015-16.

The ACC won't always be this good in football. The SEC won't always be Alabama And Everyone Else. But the ACC, which has always fielded a lot of NFL-caliber talent, at least now has the blueprint for sustained success.

HIRING BETTER COACHES

Lately, the ACC has made the kind of coaching hires that we're used to seeing from the SEC. Money is no problem for the SEC, yet its schools are sacrificing accomplished résumés for cost savings, coaches connected to Nick Saban, or both. The 2016 season marked the least experienced group of SEC head coaches in 52 years, and it showed.

The eat-or-be-eaten world of the SEC seems to have turned off some coaches. Tom Herman chose Texas over LSU, which promoted interim head coach Ed Orgeron. Georgia went with Kirby Smart, who had no head coaching experience until last season. Will Muschamp got a second life at South Carolina after failing at Florida. Jim McElwain won the SEC East his first two years, but that's not the achievement it used to be. Missouri, the SEC East champion in 2013-14, hired Barry Odom without college head coaching experience.

Look who the ACC hired in 2016: Miami's Mark Richt, Syracuse's Dino Babers, Virginia's Bronco Mendenhall and Virginia Tech's Justin Fuente. Prior to their arrival at their respective schools, they had a combined .698 winning percentage and 307 career wins. Meanwhile, the ACC had previously brought in Pat Narduzzi (Pittsburgh), Bobby Petrino (Louisville) and Dave Clawson (Wake Forest) to increase the depth.

Ultimately, a conference is measured by how many elite teams it has. The ACC changed dramatically as Clemson and Florida State — the subject of Big 12 expansion rumors not too long ago — became elite simultaneously. Dabo Swinney and Jimbo Fisher, two former SEC assistants, brought an SEC mentality to the ACC that upped the ante.

Fisher turned down LSU in consecutive years to stay at Florida State, which he obviously considers a better job.

Swinney may one day face the question about whether he wants to replace Saban at Alabama. But that day isn't here yet, and Clemson is built to be elite over the long haul. The Tigers just moved into Dabo-Land, a $55 million team building that includes a slide, mini-golf, wiffle ball field, basketball courts and outdoor grills.

"You don't want to play a team from this conference," Swinney says. "You just don't. I don't care — name one. That's why we're ready. That's why we're ready to go play Oklahoma two years in a row. That's why we're ready to go play Ohio State two out of the last four years. We're ready because of what we see week in and week out in this conference."

> *"Quarterback is where I think the rest of the country, especially the ACC, has been able to close the gap to a degree on the SEC.* ***The (ACC) quarterback play is just better than in the SEC.***
>
> *— Phil Savage, Senior Bowl Executive Director"*





The ACC coaching roll call includes a couple of impressive recent arrivals: established A-lister Mark Richt of Miami (top) and rising star Justin Fuente of Virginia Tech.



The ACC has flourished in recent years thanks in large part to outstanding play from quarterbacks like Louisville's Lamar Jackson.

QUARTERBACK PLAY

In recent years, the ACC closed the gap with the SEC by gaining an edge at quarterback. Elite quarterbacks from the ACC/SEC footprint started swinging to the ACC.

Jameis Winston started the trend by leaving Birmingham, Ala., for Florida State. Deshaun Watson was raised in Gainesville, Ga., but he became a Clemson Tiger, not a Georgia Bulldog. Heisman Trophy winner Lamar Jackson, who was under-recruited out of Boynton Beach, Fla., chose Louisville despite a late push by Florida. Deondre Francois, from Orlando, went to Florida State after Florida swung and missed on him, too.

"Quarterback is where I think the rest of the country, especially the ACC, has been able to close the gap to a degree on the SEC," says Senior Bowl executive director Phil Savage, a former NFL general manager.

"The [ACC] quarterback play is just better than in the SEC. People argue the defenses in the SEC are better, and that's probably true. But for just the pure spinning of the football and the overall arm talent, there's been a quartet of [ACC] guys that can really throw it."

The SEC has led college football in NFL Draft picks for 10 consecutive years. But all of the speed, strength and athleticism can only take a team so far without a quality quarterback. Alabama's Jalen Hurts showed great poise and may be terrific in the future, but he got exposed as a true freshman in the College Football Playoff given his passing limitations.

From 2012-16, SEC teams signed 39 four- or five-star quarterbacks, according to 247Sports. So far, only one of those recruits turned into a very important player who finished his career at the same school: Tennessee's Joshua Dobbs. Major SEC recruits David Cornwell, Kyler Murray, Kyle Allen, Kenny Hill, Will Grier, Maty Mauk, Hayden Rettig and Zeke Pike have come and gone.

Over the same period, ACC teams signed 21 four- or five-star quarterbacks. As of now, three have been very good players and stayed at their schools the entire time — Winston, Watson, and Miami's Brad Kaaya. Jackson and Francois appear headed in that direction, too. So far, the hit-rate scoreboard on these QB recruits: 14 percent for the ACC, 3 percent for the SEC.

The SEC had one passer in 2016 ranked among the top 25 in quarterback rating (Dobbs), according to CFBStats.com. The ACC had six (Pittsburgh's Nathan Peterman, North Carolina's Mitch Trubisky, Virginia Tech's Jerod Evans, Watson, Kaaya and Jackson).

However, only Jackson returns from that ACC group in 2017. The SEC will bank on the possibly bright futures of Hurts, Ole Miss' Shea Patterson, Georgia's Jacob Eason, Florida's Feleipe Franks (or Kyle Trask), Tennessee's Jarrett Guarantano (or Quinten Dormady) and South Carolina's Jake Bentley. Half of the top-14 rated quarterback recruits in 2017 are going to the ACC or SEC, including No. 2 Hunter Johnson to Clemson and No. 3 Tua Tagovailoa to Alabama.

IMPROVED DEFENSES

According to Bill Connelly's S&P+ rankings, eight of the top 22 defenses in the country last season came from the ACC: No. 6 Clemson, No. 10 Florida State, No. 11 NC State, No. 13 Miami, No. 17 Virginia Tech, No. 19 Louisville, No. 21 Boston College and No. 22 Wake Forest. Only the Big Ten, which had worse offenses, played better defense on average than the ACC based on the S&P+ rankings.

Now, whether that's sustainable for the ACC remains to be seen. Eight of the 11 players on the first-team All-ACC defense were seniors, and two others declared early for the draft. The next wave of stars includes Clemson defensive linemen Christian Wilkins and Dexter Lawrence and Florida State defensive backs Derwin James (who missed most of 2016 with an injury) and Tarvarus McFadden.

Having several quality defenses was a huge key for the SEC becoming a major power. The last time the ACC seriously tried to compete with the SEC was more than a decade ago.

From 1999-2003, the ACC and SEC split 36 games. There were arguments made by coaches and in the media that the ACC had surpassed the SEC and was better positioned for the future due to adding Miami, Virginia Tech and Boston College in 2004-05. Florida State's Bobby Bowden even bragged in 2004 that, by adding Miami, "The state of Florida is going to learn about the ACC," and "the stepbrother is down in Gainesville."

That didn't happen. The SEC won seven straight national titles (from 2006-12) with Alabama, Florida, LSU and Auburn. The ACC, which has won only seven football national titles in its history, went 14 years without winning one during its longest drought since 1953-81.

But thanks in part to the league's defensive resurgence, the ACC and SEC have somewhat flipped roles in recent years. Last season, for the first time since 2002, only one SEC team finished in the final top 10 of the Associated Press top 25. The SEC had five final top-10 teams combined from 2014-16, down from 13 in the previous three seasons.

Jackson: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Clemson: AP

IS ACC SUCCESS SUSTAINABLE?

Herein lies the major question for the ACC: How many of its schools really want to win big in football? Clemson and Florida State are givens. They've got SEC-style fan bases and history.

Virginia Tech has a passionate fan base that wants to return to the glory years of Frank Beamer. Richt returned to his alma mater to try to reinvigorate "The U," and Miami is raising millions of dollars to build an indoor practice facility. Louisville is the ACC's best example of a basketball-centric school that has shown how it's possible to build up football, too.

Still, as a whole, the SEC will always have more rabid fans than the ACC, for better or worse. That passion drives schools to win at all costs — sometimes at the expense of NCAA violations (hello, Ole Miss). Who in the ACC is really willing to stay involved in cutthroat recruiting, managing the academic eligibility shell game for pockets of players, and the football spending arms race? Some ACC schools will be willing, but probably not as many as in the SEC.

Where the ACC has an edge is coaching stability, and that's huge. In recent years, the SEC has become an odd whack-a-mole game where almost every coach not named Saban appears on hot-seat lists every so often.

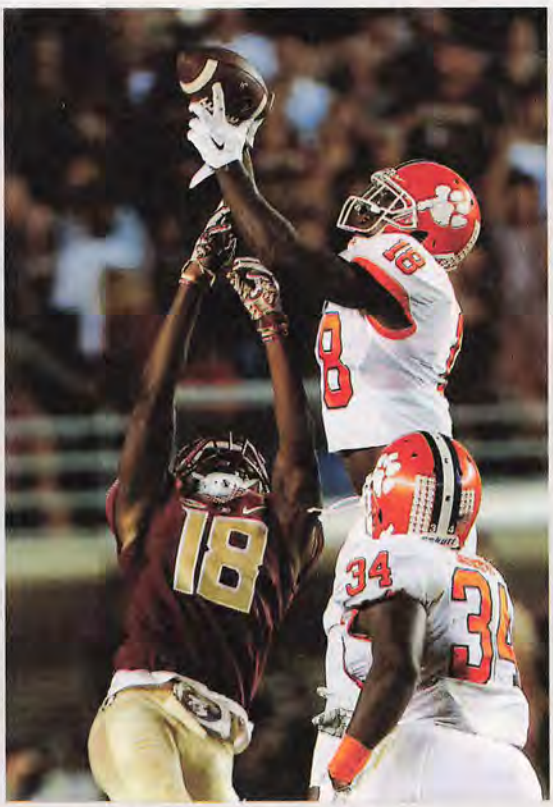
The SEC isn't going to wither and die. Florida, Alabama and Tennessee have made smart athletic director hires recently in Scott Stricklin, Greg Byrne and John Currie, respectively. Yet it's a conference in transition compared to the ACC, which lost a few key assistants to the SEC this offseason, such as Mississippi State defensive coordinator Todd Grantham (from Louisville) and LSU offensive coordinator Matt Canada (from Pittsburgh).

What changed? "The easy observation is everybody wants what we achieved," SEC commissioner Greg Sankey says.

No kidding. The ACC took the bold step of moving up its media days this summer to compete for one day with the SEC. On July 13, the media can choose between hearing Gus Malzahn, Hugh Freeze and Will Muschamp talk about the SEC, or Dabo Swinney, Jimbo Fisher and Bobby Petrino about the ACC. The SEC could have countered by scheduling Saban on July 13, but didn't.

The ACC has sent a message. Now comes the hard part: Sustaining that success.

GAME OF THE YEAR



It's long past time to state the obvious: Clemson-Florida State is college football's best annual game.

Rest in peace, Alabama-LSU, at least until the Tigers snap their six-game losing streak to Nick Saban. We see you, Ohio State-Michigan — which had a classic thriller last year — but Jim Harbaugh still must beat Urban Meyer to get the series over the hump.

Neither of those games feels like where we're at with Clemson-Florida State, which is the game that's most likely to have huge national championship implications each year. That's what we mean by "best." We don't mean best rivalry, most-watched game or even necessarily the most well-played game.

Rather, Clemson-Florida State is the one game you can bank on having to watch to figure out the College Football Playoff.

Look at the facts. Only four schools have had top-15 teams over each of the past five years: Alabama, Ohio State, Florida State and Clemson. Clemson-Florida State has produced five straight years of top-15 final rankings for both teams, something the Alabama-LSU series never accomplished under Saban and Les Miles.

Alabama and LSU each finished in the top 15 for four straight years (2010-13). So did Stanford and Oregon out of the Pac-12 during that same period. Clemson and Florida State are at five and counting.

Florida State won the final BCS title in 2013 and reached the CFP semifinals in 2014. Clemson narrowly lost the CFP National Championship to Alabama in 2015 and exacted revenge by topping the Crimson Tide in 2016.

The talent in Clemson-Florida State games has reached an incredibly high level. From 2011-15, the Clemson-Florida State games produced 62 NFL Draft picks and 12 first-rounders. That's very close to the Alabama-LSU series (71 draft picks, 16 first-rounders) and Florida-Florida State (64 draft picks, 14 first-rounders).

Clemson-Florida State surpasses the talent produced from more hyped annual series, such as Miami-Florida State (55 draft picks, 10 first-rounders), Ohio State-Michigan (43 draft picks, eight first-rounders) and Oklahoma-Texas (40 draft picks, 12 first-rounders).

Seminoles coach Jimbo Fisher says that the talent and physicality of the Clemson games is "absolutely" similar to SEC games he used to coach in for 13 years. Just like Alabama-LSU once was, Clemson-Florida State is the game in the back of everyone's mind that will define both teams' seasons.

Recently departed Florida State running back Dalvin Cook says Clemson is moving into the conversation of becoming the Seminoles' top rival.

"That's a game that the fans and the players and our whole staff look forward to," he says. "They recruit talent just like we do so you've got to respect the game. That's just become the rivalry between Florida State and Clemson and I love it."

For six straight years, the Clemson-Florida State winner has won the ACC. The loser of that game has still averaged 10 wins. In other words: Circle Nov. 11, 2017, for Florida State at Clemson. It's the game that matters most.

— Jon Solomon

WHAT'S UP WITH THE FADE?

Hated by fans and mocked on social media, "The Fade" never seems to work. So why does it have a prominent place in the college game?

BY BILL CONNELLY



Every fan has experienced it. Your team has the ball in scoring position. It's a big moment. And before you can say, "Run the dang ball!" your quarterback is cocking back to lob the football toward the back corner of the end zone. It lands two yards out of bounds, safely out of reach of the nearest offensive and defensive players. You fill with rage. You scream obscenities at your team's offensive coordinator as the placekicker trots onto the field to attempt a field goal.

Why would anybody possibly want to throw a fade route there? Doesn't the coach know that play never works?

You're right, by the way. The red-zone fade isn't an efficient play. According to Pro Football Focus, college teams had a success rate of only about 36 percent when attempting it during the 2016 season. That's right in line with pro averages of about 33 to 35 percent.

So what gives? Why does this play seem to be a base part of virtually every college offense even though the ball falls harmlessly to the turf about two-thirds of the time? Part of the draw, actually, is that it indeed falls to the turf.

Pro Football Focus data tells us that while there were 61 touchdowns thrown via red-zone fades in 2016, there were also only four interceptions. You might score a touchdown, you might draw a defensive pass interference penalty, or you might live to fight another down.

"It's a safe throw," says Nebraska offensive coordinator Danny Langsdorf. "The matchup is always an issue, but I think that, playing the odds, the completion rate certainly isn't high. But I'd rather give up that low-percentage fade throw [than something riskier]. And I can see why teams take away the inside and give you that outside throw. They want to see if you can complete it."

Langsdorf has coached at virtually every level of the game of football during his 20-year coaching career, calling plays for the CFL's Edmonton Eskimos (2000-01), Oregon State (2005-13) and now Nebraska (2015-present). He also worked as an offen-

Fred Vuich

sive assistant for the New Orleans Saints (2002-04) and New York Giants (2014). "When you have a guy like Eli Manning throwing to Odell Beckham Jr., that's a different deal than in college. You obviously have a better chance of completing it. And you'll see it a lot in Canada — you're at the 5, and it's like you're throwing a Go route [a more vertical cousin of the fade] instead of a fade because of the 20-yard end zone."

It can still serve a purpose in college, though, and it usually has to do with the matchups a defense is offering. "Defenses are going to challenge you," says Oklahoma State offensive coordinator Mike Yurcich. "They know it's a low-percentage throw, and they're going to factor that in. That's the fun part of competing."

Colorado State head coach Mike Bobo concurs. "A lot of times you see fades thrown, but originally a run was called. The defense has the box outnumbered, and you have 1-on-1 on the outside, so you throw that. It's your hot answer. It's never just 'I'm calling the fade.'"

"Philosophically, it's interesting what defenses are willing to give up based on how they feel they match up with you," Yurcich says. "We got challenged quite a bit this year even though we thought we were pretty good athletically at receiver. We continued to see press-man [coverage], even in the bowl game [against Colorado]."

Pressing college receivers at the line can work wonders for a defense, at least one that can actually pull it off. But OSU's receivers were dynamite in 2016, and they had Mason Rudolph throwing them the ball. Rudolph completed 57 percent of his passes in the red zone — "everything over 55 percent down there is a good mark," says Yurcich — for 13 touchdowns and just one interception.

Colorado State had one of the most reliable red-zone offenses in the country in 2016, averaging 5.5 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40). What does Bobo, a former offensive coordinator at Georgia, think about the fade? He credits a quality run game for a lot of the Rams' red-zone success, but he does employ the fade … with a twist.

"When I was with Coach [Mark] Richt at Georgia, we were more 'Throw it into the bucket' [on fades] — kind of an old-school fade," he says. But they learned that completion percentages went up when they weren't aiming quite so deep in the corner of the end zone.

"It's a safe throw. The matchup is always an issue, but I think that, playing the odds, the completion rate certainly isn't high. But I'd rather give up that low-percentage fade throw [than something riskier]. And I can see why teams take away the inside and give you that outside throw. They want to see if you can complete it."

— Nebraska offensive coordinator Danny Langsdorf

If you think about it, one of the hardest things about a good fade is that there are virtually three defenders on the play — the cornerback, the back of the end zone and the sideline. The old-school, in-the-bucket approach created a tiny window of success where a receiver could go up and get the ball. But there's a throw that offers more margin for error. "We identified a spot in the red zone, five yards deep and about three yards from the sideline," Bobo says. "That was the spot we would throw it to. That still goes to the receiver's back shoulder, but the receiver is selling it like they're throwing to the back pylon."

Still, even with solid execution, this is a play the defense doesn't mind the offense attempting most of the time.

"You'll play that rare team that maybe throws it really well or has a big-time receiver you would worry about," says Northwestern defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz. In those instances, "You'd make sure you try to take that into consideration and maybe not give them as many of those." But generally, playing tight, taking away inside throws, and daring a QB to make a pinpoint lob is a good way to go because incomplete passes lead to field goals, and field goals don't usually beat you — touchdowns do.

"We talk about it all the time," Hankwitz says. "Field goals aren't going to beat you very often. So when we get inside the 12, that's when we go to our more specific coverage. We try to practice that specific situation.

"That's a big-time win if you hold them to a field goal," he continues. "Offenses are going to get down into the scoring area [in today's college football], but we know we need to win the red zone. Just because they've gotten down there doesn't mean they're going to score. Field goals are psychological, too — 'We've gotten down there three times, and we only got nine points?'"

Hankwitz is right that field goals won't do much damage, and he's right about the low percentage of the fade. You do get one throwaway down, though.

Expected points per drive, goal-to-go situation



On average, if you gain zero yards on first-and-goal, you only lose about 0.6 expected points. For instance, on first-and-goal from the 4, FBS offenses averaged 6.15 points per possession; on second-and-goal, they averaged 5.56.

That isn't a significant drop-off, but things get dicey from there. The average drop grows to 0.9 expected points with an incomplete pass on second-and-goal. Example: second-and-goal from the 7 was worth 4.61 points in 2016, but third-and-goal from the 7 was worth 3.73.

On third-and-goal, things take on a far more all-or-nothing quality. A team's expected point total drops by about 1.5 points on average with no gain on third-and-goal and by 1.75 points inside the 5.

"Earlier downs is where you'd like to see them," Langsdorf says, in reference to the hated fade.

The lesson: Don't curse your offensive coordinator for throwing a harmless fade — as long as it's on first down. If it's third down, curse up a storm.

OKLAHOMA'S NOT-SO-SECRET WEAPON

BY IAN BOYD

Once a largely overlooked recruit, Baker Mayfield has emerged as the Big 12's most productive quarterback



Baker Mayfield's 2016 season will go down as one of the most effective years by any quarterback in the Bob Stoops era at Oklahoma. His place as a Heisman finalist in New York merely underscored what was evident from an 11–2 season that included the first perfect 9–0 finish by any team since the Big 12 introduced round-robin scheduling.

While Mayfield didn't shoulder as much of the load as previous Oklahoma QB stalwarts, his efficiency was comparable to Sam Bradford's during his Heisman-winning 2008 season or some of the other top seasons by Stoops' better QBs.

Mayfield really blew previous Oklahoma signal-callers out of the water in three areas: yards per attempt, TD-to-INT ratio and completion percentage. Essentially, these stats that measure how efficient a QB is with the attempts he's making in the passing game.

So how did Mayfield, who began his career as a walk-on at Texas Tech, achieve such an incredible level of efficiency? Was it the system and play calling by his offensive coordinator Lincoln Riley, or Mayfield's own brilliance? What can he achieve in his final year?

Naturally, it's a combination of a lot of things. Mayfield can boast of a very broad skill set that allows him to execute a variety of different concepts, which enabled Riley to unlock possibly the most talented cast of skill players in the entire country.

Mayfield's skill set

Mayfield's various competencies on the football field are a nice microcosm for explaining how high school quarterbacks are so regularly misevaluated. Mayfield lacked a scholarship offer from any program in the Big 12 or any other Power 5 conference. Normally coaches value specific skills from their QB recruits, most notably NFL-caliber arm strength or elite running ability. Mayfield had neither.

But while Mayfield wasn't an intimidating runner, he was a quick enough athlete to execute QB-run concepts at a collegiate level, if not explosive enough to be the feature of a run game. He didn't have the height to survey the field from the pocket or a cannon arm to attack every part of the field, but he was already good in high school at finding passing windows and had enough arm strength to make the throws common to a spread offense, even while on the move.

When you have a QB who's competent or better in multiple areas, it can open up a world of possibilities for an offense. As an example of how the Sooners would take advantage of Mayfield's various abilities on one of their basic runs, consider the "counter-trey." **(see diagram 1)**

In this version of the play, Oklahoma would have Mayfield read the backside defensive end so the Sooners could leave him unblocked and pull the guard and tackle like on the traditional counter-trey run. However, they'd also have the H-back run a quick route over the middle into the zone that the middle linebacker was supposed to cover, creating an additional read for Mayfield.

If the end crashes to try and tackle the RB, Mayfield can pull the ball and either run it himself or toss it to the H-back if the middle linebacker is chasing the run action. If the end stays home to stop Mayfield from taking off, then Mayfield can either hand off or still toss it to the H-back if the linebacker failed to pick him up in coverage.

Including an option read on just one of those two players would allow the Sooners to pull both linemen and execute a classic and effective play. By adding a read on a second defender (the linebacker), the Sooners forced opponents to commit an extra man from the secondary somewhere to have any chance of stopping the run.

It's a very clever play design built largely off Mayfield's ability to make quick decisions without asking for game-changing speed or an NFL arm. The beneficiary here was the running back, either Samaje Perine (Oklahoma's career rushing leader) or Joe Mixon, both of whom ran for over 1,000 yards.

Mayfield was asked to make several quick decisions and then be mobile enough to run around a bit or make a

Chris Covatta

short, accurate toss. None of these skills would entice NFL scouts, but they were valuable to the Sooners' offensive staff.

Putting it all together in 2016

Oklahoma had a lot of play designs that worked in this fashion, using multiple skill players in the same design either through pass options attached to runs or old-fashioned play action. The result was a multiplier effect for every athletic advantage Oklahoma already had over its opponents.

It's hard to stop Perine running behind an Oklahoma offensive line, but it's even harder if you also have to worry about the quarterback pulling the ball and either darting around an uncovered edge or flipping the ball out to an uncovered receiver.

Something to note from the comparative chart **(above, right)** of Stoops' best quarterbacks is that Mayfield threw only about 75 percent as many passes last season as either of Oklahoma's Heisman-winning signal callers, Jason White or Sam Bradford, and only 58 percent as many passes as Landry Jones. His production and efficiency are a testament to how Riley, OU's offensive coordinator, was able to use him as a conduit for feeding the Sooners' stud skill talent.

One of those key talents was Mayfield's fellow Heisman finalist and star wide receiver Dede Westbrook. The former junior college transfer was a total blur whenever he had open grass to work with, and it was hard for defenses to deny him that space when they also had to worry about the Sooner run game.

Riley typically set Westbrook up with play action and the wide receiver screen game, both of which would draw defenders into the scrum only to have Mayfield toss it out wide to Westbrook running into space and turning on the jets.

The combination of Westbrook's speed and the Sooners' run game was exceptionally potent and made up a considerable bulk of the Oklahoma offense. Oklahoma ran 957 plays in 2016 — 60 percent of which were runs. Of the 384 passes, Westbrook was the target for 104 — just over 27 percent.

This point guard-esque role was one that Mayfield was well prepared for by his high school experience running the Lake Travis offense and winning a Texas state championship. Lake Travis has thrived over the years by training versatile skill players and moving them all over the field while the quarterback sorts out who's at an advantage and then distributes the ball to them.

Riley would often set Mayfield up for easy reads to determine which Sooner to hit by making use of versatile players like Mixon or flex tight end Mark Andrews. That duo accounted for another 25.7 percent of Mayfield's targets in the passing game and were highly efficient, combining for 1,027 yards (11.2 yards per target) and 12 TDs.

Andrews' specialty was presenting a big target — he's 6'5" 250 pounds — in the seams or a big blocker on the perimeter while Mixon would run routes out of the backfield, be a checkdown for Mayfield or even flex out wide as a receiver.

Against Auburn in the Sugar Bowl, the Sooners hit the Tigers defense with several targeted play calls featuring misdirection, fakes and reverses that all took advantage of their versatile skill-position players. Andrews, Mixon and Westbrook combined forces in variety of ways to give Auburn fits and set Mayfield up for some easy reads that helped him to average 10.6 yards per pass attempt.

One such example was a bubble screen. **(see diagram 2)**

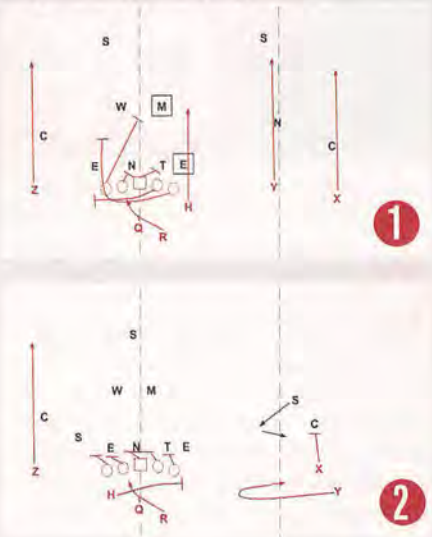
The Sooners were running a "split zone" running play inside, but the Tigers had loaded up the middle of the field to try and stop the run, trusting their defensive backs to hold up outside in man coverage. Oklahoma lined up Andrews on the line at the "X" receiver position and Westbrook (the "Y") off the line behind him. They motioned Westbrook in, and Mayfield watched to see how the Auburn defensive backs would respond. When one of them motioned inside with Westbrook, the Sooners quickly snapped the ball and then flipped it out to their speedy receiver while Andrews mauled the cornerback with a block. The Auburn safety trying to cover Westbrook couldn't reverse field and catch him in time, leading to a Sooner touchdown.

It's yet another example in which Mayfield simply has to understand what the offense is trying to do against a particular defense, make a quick decision and then get the ball to the right player in the right place at the right time.

Baker Mayfield: Best of the bunch?

Year	Quarterback	Stats
2003	Jason White: 6-2, 220. RJR Heisman winner	451 passes, 3846 yards, 61.6%, 8.5 yards per attempt, 40 TDs, 10 INTs
2008	Sam Bradford: 6-4, 220. RSO 3-star recruit by 247 composite Heisman winner	483 passes, 4720 yards, 67.9%, 9.8 yards per attempt, 50 TDs, 8 INTs
2010	Landry Jones: 6-4, 223. RSO 4-star recruit by 247 composite All-Big 12 1st team	617 passes, 4718 yards, 65.6%, 7.6 yards per attempt, 38 TDs, 12 INTs
2016	Baker Mayfield: 6-1, 209. RJR 3-star recruit by 247 composite Heisman finalist	358 passes, 3965 yards, 70.9%, 10.2 yards per attempt, 40 TDs, 8 INTs

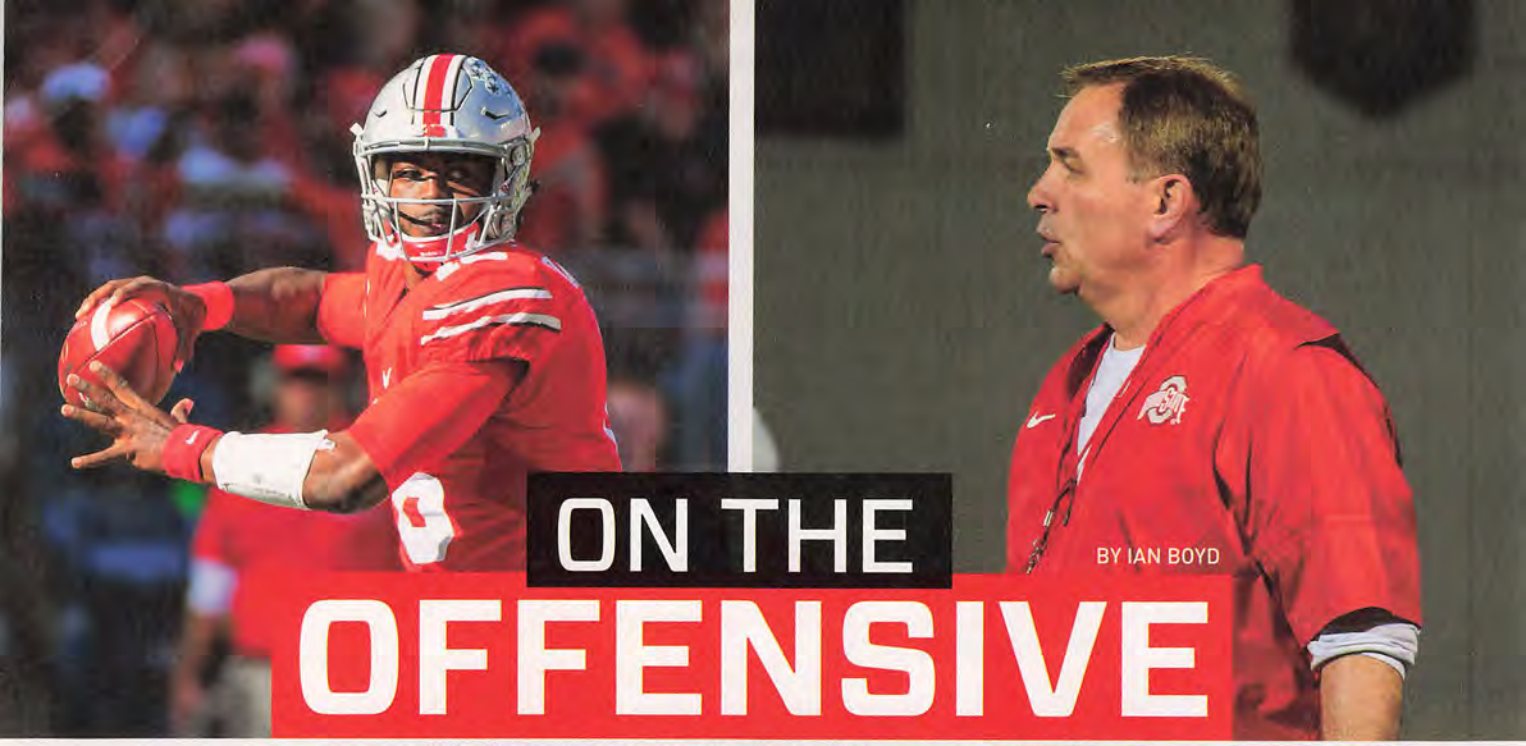
Expanding the playbook



What about 2017?

The obvious question for 2017 is what the Oklahoma offense will look like now that Perine, Mixon and Westbrook are all gone. The trio combined to account for 159 targets, 2,168 receiving yards and 23 receiving touchdowns as well as 394 rushes, 2,435 rushing yards and 22 rushing TDs. All told, that's 62 percent of the Sooners' plays on offense, 63 percent of their yardage and 60 percent of their touchdowns.

The Sooners faced a similar, if smaller, challenge in 2016 when they replaced receiver Sterling Shepard after his 1,200-yard season in 2015. The answer now as it was then is that they'll plug in new faces at running back, find another receiver on the roster who can hurt opposing teams when they zero in too much on the run, and lean on Mayfield to get the ball to the right players while calling his own shots as necessary. As long as the scrappy quarterback is leading the way, Riley won't find it difficult to set up Oklahoma's next generation of skill athletes for success.



ON THE OFFENSIVE

BY IAN BOYD

Ohio State has turned to Kevin Wilson to provide the J.T. Barrett-led Buckeyes offense with a jumpstart

Ohio State's 2014 national championship under Urban Meyer was defined by two breakthrough games for the Buckeyes offense. The first was their regular-season takedown of fellow Big Ten contender Michigan State on the Spartans' own turf. That victory was spearheaded by young quarterback J.T. Barrett, who threw for 300 yards on 26 attempts (11.5 yards per attempt), thoroughly wrecking Michigan State's "load-the-box, stop-the-run" defensive strategy with explosive gains in the passing game.

The next breakthrough was their Big Ten Championship Game victory over the Wisconsin Badgers with backup Cardale Jones at quarterback. Jones threw only 17 passes, but they went for 257 yards and 15.3 yards per attempt, which easily exploited the Badgers' strategy of focusing on the QB run game.

In hindsight, it's clear that those impressive victories — and the explosiveness in the passing game — were the main indicators that Ohio State — and not Alabama — would go on to win the national title.

That explosiveness was absent in 2016 when the Buckeyes made their way to the College Football Playoff with a combination of stellar defensive play and quarterback runs — until an extremely talented Clemson defense handed Meyer the first shutout of his career.

Now, Meyer has turned to Kevin Wilson, the former head at coach at Indiana, to engineer another breakthrough. There's a lot for Wilson to fix — but also a lot of talent at his disposal.

The silenced Buckeyes offense

The Barrett-led Buckeyes are responsible for one of the more dominant schemes in modern college football, the QB split-zone play from a four-WR formation **(diagram 1)**.

With four receivers running routes to worry about, it can be very difficult for the opposition to get enough defenders in the box to stop the quarterback runs, particularly this split-zone scheme that Barrett can read and execute at a high level. When combined with the Buckeye quarterback's 6'2" 222-pound frame and outstanding quickness, it was a nearly automatic conversion on 3rd-and-6 or less. With pass options attached, it could also become an easy way to isolate a speedy skill player or a big target in space.

The problem for the Buckeyes in 2016: They they were excellent at using quarterback runs and option plays, but they weren't particularly good at anything else.

Barrett averaged only 6.7 yards per passing attempt, and two of the team's top three targeted receivers included H-back (a slot back position) Curtis Samuel and tight end Marcus Baugh, both of whom roamed in the middle of the field. Their star receiver on the outside, Noah Brown, managed only 7.7 yards per target. Opposing defenses with good cornerback play didn't have to worry about the vertical passing game.

Closer examination of Ohio State's various failures on offense in 2016 reveals that Barrett and his receivers were not always on the same page. While the Buckeyes could execute a concert of blocks and reads in the spread-option run game, they did not enjoy a similar mastery of the passing game, and there wasn't a go-to receiver they could trust to get open.

The issues came to the forefront when Ohio State faced teams that weren't overwhelmed by the Buckeyes' offensive line — teams such as Wisconsin, Penn State, Michigan State, Michigan and Clemson.

Without the ability to grab chunk yardage with its running game, Ohio State failed to generate the type of explosive plays that have made Meyer-coached teams so effective in the past.

The Wilson fix

Wilson earned his reputation as one of the game's top offensive coaches while the coordinator at Northwestern, most notably during a memorable 54–51 win over Michigan in 2000 when the Wildcats rolled up an astounding 654 total yards. Northwestern operated an up-tempo spread built around the run game, which is now fairly ubiquitous in the college game.

Wilson next went to Oklahoma, where his greatest achievement was a 2008 season in which quarterback Sam Bradford threw for 4,720 yards and 50 touchdowns (and won the Heisman Trophy) and two OU running backs, DeMarco Murray and Chris Brown, ran for over 1,000 yards.

In 2011, he was named head coach at

Barrett: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Wilson: Ohio State Athletics

Indiana, where his offenses continued to thrive; the Hoosiers ranked in the top five in the Big Ten in total offense every season from 2012-16.

A look at Wilson's work from his time at both Oklahoma and Indiana indicates that his strengths will go a long way in shoring up Ohio State's weakness **(see red chart, below right)**. As you can tell from these S&P+ adjusted stats, despite building run-centric offenses, Wilson's teams have consistently thrown the ball very well, even when they don't run it effectively. When they do run the ball well, the passing game flourishes even more.

Wilson's approach to the passing game has been quite different from what we've seen at Ohio State in recent years. Under Meyer, it's been fairly obvious when the Buckeyes want to throw the ball. They've featured empty formations designed to create stress and simple reads before the snap.

They used such a set early against Wisconsin last year **(diagram 2)**. It's basically an isolation play, with the receivers lined up in an unbalanced 4x1 set but with the intention of setting up Samuel ("R" in this diagram) to work in isolation against a Badger linebacker in the middle of the field. However, the Badgers dropped a safety down, bracketed Samuel with the extra man, and used a stunt with linebacker T.J. Watt and defensive tackle Conor Sheehy to bring down Barrett for a sack when his easy read wasn't open.

The Wilson passing game isn't designed to create opportunities for easy tosses between the hash marks like Meyer's empty formations. Instead, there's a greater focus on developing chemistry between the quarterback and outside receivers to work the space outside the hash marks that teams vacate in order to stop the run. The comeback route and back shoulder fade are much more common in Wilson's attack.

The three most targeted receivers for the Indiana Hoosiers last year were the two outside receivers and the main slot receiver, each of whom had as many targets (around 90) as Samuel, the lead Buckeye receiver. They made heavy use of concepts in which the slot would attack the seam and command the attention of the deep safety(s) and thus free up the outside receiver(s) to work in the open grass outside the hash marks — concepts such as the dig/post route combination **(diagram 3)**.

This kind of route distribution and formation presents four stress points for the defense that may require help from the safety. The first is for the cornerback who is isolated on the outside receiver on the boundary. The second is down in the box, where the defense has to worry about stopping the run. The third stress point is over the dig route by the slot receiver, who may not have the full attention of the nickel back if that defender has responsibilities against the run. The fourth is on the post route by the other outside receiver; if the safety is helping on the dig route by the slot, the cornerback will be left alone on the dreaded post route.

That's four areas that may require safety help but only two players to address the issues. Plays like this take advantage of the natural spacing that occurs on the field when the defense has to worry about getting defenders to the point of attack on running plays while handling the stress of a spread formation. The key is that Wilson's teams have generally shown a greater command of how to attack that space — both in the passing and running games — than Ohio State's recent offenses.

Many of these concepts are already present in the Ohio State playbook; they simply haven't been an area of emphasis.

The Buckeyes offense in 2017

In the long term, it's clear that Ohio State will be running an offense that closely resembles Indiana's attack under Wilson. The quarterbacks in the Buckeyes' pipeline — Joe Burrow, Dwayne Haskins and incoming four-star freshman Tate Martell — were highly recruited for their abilities in the passing game, not just what they offer as runners.

The challenge in the short term will be fitting this paradigm into Meyer's existing offense and getting Barrett and the outside receivers on the same page so that they can hit timing routes outside of the hash marks. It'll be a fresh start, with Samuel and Brown both departing for the NFL and the Buckeyes looking to replace them with very green receivers.

If they can get that dimension of their offense humming, then the option run game will once again be dominant and explosive, helping Ohio State contend for championships in the improving Big Ten.

Bogged-down Buckeyes



Kevin Wilson's S&P Résumé

Year	Team	Offensive S&P+	Rushing S&P+	Passing S&P+	Passing Downs S&P+
2016	Indiana	67th	108th	23rd	20th
2015	Indiana	15th	56th	11th	18th
2014	Indiana	63rd	35th	116th	109th
2013	Indiana	16th	8th	21st	17th
2012	Indiana	54th	86th	40th	45th
2011	Indiana	85th	58th	107th	99th
2010	Oklahoma	6th	74th	8th	22nd
2009	Oklahoma	60th	102nd	37th	38th
2008	Oklahoma	4th	11th	1st	1st
2007	Oklahoma	15th	29th	13th	31st
2006	Oklahoma	26th	47th	18th	58th

Q&A with LAMAR JACKSON



A Heisman Trophy winner with unfinished business? That's the situation Lamar Jackson finds himself in this season. Jackson had one of the most statistically dominant campaigns in college football history, but a late slump left him and his Louisville teammates wanting more. And a hungry Jackson is an especially frightening prospect for the teams on Louisville's schedule this year.

College football's most electrifying and dangerous player is also one of its most engaging and humble, as we found out in this offseason encounter with the Cardinals quarterback.

When did you first realize you had a chance to win the Heisman Trophy?

I tell everyone this: Not until I had it. There were a lot of us that did a lot of great things last year. Deshaun [Watson] with his success. Jabrill [Peppers] with his success. Baker [Mayfield] and his receiver [Dede Westbrook]. I was the youngest one out of the group, and I felt like anything could have happened. I was just happy to be in New York, and when they finally called my name then I knew I had it.

Even though you were considered the leader the entire season and everybody was predicting you were the winner?

I really didn't pay attention to that. I tried to stay away from it as much as I could. A lot of people get sidetracked by that stuff. I just tried to stay focused and win games.

What's the one thing that sticks out in your mind from the night you won the Heisman?

There are a lot of things that stick out in my mind. I met a lot of great people. My family was there. It was crazy, like I said before, I almost cried. I think [U of L teammate Brandon] Radcliff jinxed me. He was like, 'Don't cry when you get on stage, bro.' I said, 'I won't cry if I win it.' Then I almost cried. So I'd say that I'd remember that the most.

Have you gone back and watched the Heisman Show on ESPN?

Oh, no. I have the award. I'm just thankful for it. I'm even more thankful now. I'm just ready to play football because I feel like I didn't finish what I started last year.

Have you kept in touch with any of the people you met in New York?

Sure. All of us talk. Jabrill. Deshaun. Dede. Bake. We message each other on social media.

How about the past winners?

No, I haven't. I haven't really talked to them. Maybe Johnny (Manziel).

Matt Hernandez Creative

He came to your room in New York after the ceremony, right?

Yes. He was speaking positive. He told me it was just the beginning. He left after that. He just talked to me for a few minutes.

How much of a college football historian are you?

I did know the history of the guys that I met, but I don't really put myself in their shoes yet. I still have two years left to play football, and there's a lot of work that I need to do.

That's interesting that you said, "two years."

Yes, sir.

Because you're planning on staying for two more years?

I'm just ready for this year right now and hopefully whatever will happen next year.

Had you known or followed many of the other Heisman winners?

Tim Tebow. His home is Florida, too, just like mine. I knew about him growing up. I felt like Florida was a great championship team and that he led his team with authority.

Were the Gators your team?

No, the (Miami) Hurricanes.

Has it been tough for you to go out after winning the Heisman?

A lot of people recognize me. We have a lot of football fanatics. They like to come up and take pictures. That's cool. I like to meet new people. The fans show love. That's what it's all about.

Somebody told me that you never turn a kid down for an autograph?

No. I got turned down for an autograph by a professional football player when I was younger. That kind of hurt me. I overlooked it. But every time a kid comes up to me and wants to take a picture, I have to stop.

Who turned you down?

Randy Moss. It was a fundraiser for kids back at a field in Pompano Beach. He was out there with a lot of other professional guys. I had my shirt [to sign]. The NFL guys signed the shirts. He was done pretty much. He had signed enough. I guess I was the last one. It hurt a couple of our feelings. He was Randy Moss, a great player.

How surprised were you by your success last year?

I wouldn't say I was surprised because I was hungry and I wanted our team to build and bring the championship here last year. Hopefully we've got another two years to do it. While I'm here, we're going to try to make it happen.

What's your best memory from last season?

There were so many. We had a great year. We went 9–4. A lot of people don't do that. I don't really have a favorite.

Not the leap at Syracuse?

I did that in high school so that wasn't so different.

Coach Bobby Petrino runs a detailed passing game. How challenging was the adjustment from high school to college?

He saw me throw the ball before I got here. He liked my film. I just had to learn the system. That was my biggest thing. In high school, we really didn't have to go out there and have a playbook and study that. Here you have to do that. You're on a whole other level. You have to know what the defense is doing. That was my biggest thing, transitioning to college. Studying films, making reads, progressions. I wanted him to be tough on me, and he has been doing that ever since I've been here. He treats me just like everyone else. Nobody is special on the team. I'm here to get coached.

Coach Petrino has said that you think you can make yardage on every play but that you need to improve on throwing the ball away and not taking hits.

He always tells me that he doesn't want me to take sacks. He wants me to throw the ball away. He knows I can take it. I love the game. Hits come with it.

You talked about starting strong last season when Louisville rose to fifth in the College Football Payoff poll before you lost your last three games. Have you talked about what went wrong?

I really can't put my mind or finger on what happened. It won't happen this year. Fumbles were one thing. I fumbled a lot last year. I wasn't expecting that. I really didn't pay attention to it until the end of the season when I fumbled like every game. I don't like that. I was being careless with the ball.

What position would you play if you weren't a quarterback?

Quarterback. I don't really look at other positions. Quarterback is something I've been doing my whole life. That's all I know.

Nobody ever talked to you about being a running back or a receiver or defensive back?

No, sir. I won't hit and I'm not good at catching. Only catching snaps.

Did you play any other positions coming up?

Youth league, I played safety.

What's your best sport other than football?

Football is the only sport I ever played.

Not basketball?

No. My coaches wouldn't let me. The basketball coach at my high school wouldn't let me. Baseball, I wanted to play but the baseball coach wouldn't let me.

Why?

I don't know. He said, "Play football for the school."

What is your favorite stadium to play in other than Louisville's Papa John's Cardinal Stadium?

Clemson. It was loud in Clemson. It was nice. Big crowd. There was a lot of energy in that game. It's very loud.

What was the best defense you faced last year?

Houston. No. 10 [Ed Oliver] was nice. I give all credit to him. He's a nice guy. I give credit to their entire defense. They played the whole four quarters. Every game can't go your way. We're going to build from that.

As the season progressed and you were getting more and more national publicity, did you become a target for opposing defenses?

Oh yeah. They would always say something to me, but I don't pay it no mind. That's part of football. They're always going to say what they want to and try to take you out of your game. You've got stay focused.

What did they say? That you're not that good or overhyped?

All kind of stuff. They'll say anything. I don't pay attention to it. I don't try to remember what they said. I didn't say "I'm going to come back and get you." I don't talk back. Just play.

Who's the best athlete on your team?

We've got some freaks on our team. Reggie Bonnafon. Seth Dawkins. Dee Smith. There's a lot of guys on our team that can do many things. I can't just name one.

Who's the most famous person who congratulated you on the Heisman?

Michael Vick. That's my favorite player, so you know I'm always going to say Michael Vick. Also Peyton Manning. It was cool talking to him, too, because that's the GOAT.

Did they give you any advice?

A lot of things. Peyton Manning told me that if you're not having fun with it, always talk with your guys. Talk to the people around the program who can help you with stuff like that. You've got to always have a smile on your face. People are always watching.

Winning the Heisman hasn't seemed to change you.

Not at all. I'm still the same person. I just have the Heisman Trophy now, that's all.



Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

Q&A with MINKAH FITZPATRICK

There aren't too many defensive backs like Minkah Fitzpatrick, who has played just about every position in the Alabama secondary in his first two seasons on campus. The All-American has eight career interceptions — four of which he's returned for touchdowns, including two in one game in 2015.

The former five-star recruit came to Alabama from Old Bridge, N.J., and played a major role in the Crimson Tide's national championship as a true freshman. Now Fitzpatrick is in position to be one of the top cornerbacks off the board in the 2018 NFL Draft.

He sat down with *Athlon Sports* in the offseason to discuss the heartbreak of the national championship game, his transition from New Jersey to Alabama and his thoughts on the best athlete on the Crimson Tide's roster.

Let's get this out of the way: Do you still think about the loss to Clemson in the national championship?

We learned a lot from that game, as a defense. It's just about finishing and executing. I feel like it was a wake-up call for a lot of us on the defense, especially. The offense did their part, for the most part. I mean, they put points on the board when they needed to. For the defense, it was just a wake-up call.

What were those next few days like after the game?

I was upset. I was real upset after the first couple hours after the game because I was around all the seniors. It was their last shot, but after a while, I shifted the focus more toward this season. I mean, we lost. I watched the game multiple times and saw what I could have done better or what my teammates could have done better. But you can't really sit on it too long. You have to learn from it, which we definitely did as a team.

Some coaches say that losing is misery while winning brings relief. Do you see things in the same light?

Yeah, because we put so much work into it, when we lose a game — especially the last game of the season — it's kind of a slap in the face because you work real hard all season and you're winning all these games. To lose the last one, it's … it's tough.

You have the Alabama record for pick-six touchdowns with four. How much do you practice that?

After every time we get a pick in practice, we return it. We never just sit there. We always catch it and return it. The defensive linemen and linebackers, all the other DBs, we always try to find a receiver or offensive player to block. I think that's why we're so good at it, because whoever has the ball, we want to see them in the end zone. Just show effort to block for your teammate and lead the way for your teammate.

Does instinct take over in that moment?

Oh yeah. I played offense in high school, so as soon as I touch the ball, I switch over to an offensive player.

When did you first realize you were not merely a good player, but you could be an All-America-caliber athlete at the highest level?

I don't know. … You never really know, because a lot of people come in and think they can play, but you never actually know until you get here. I would say you never really know.

You're a New Jersey guy. Why Alabama?

The main thing was the demand for excellence here. I feel like I'm kind of that way on myself and the people around me always demand the best. I demand the best every day, no matter what it is. And Coach Saban and the rest of the coaches, no matter who it is, they just kind of have that same mindset. If you're not giving your best, you might as well not be doing anything at all. I like that about the program and the connection you have with everybody on campus. Everybody wants to see you do well because they know all the work we put in.

How did the reality of playing football at Alabama compare to the vision you had in your head as a high schooler?

I'm going to be honest with you. I really didn't know what to expect. I'm the first person in my family to go to college, so I really didn't know exactly what to expect in the actual college social scene, besides movies. Well, some of it is actually true (laughs). Football-wise, I'd talk to people that were a couple years ahead of me and get insight from them. But they didn't come to Alabama, and nothing is like Alabama. I knew it was going to be hard, and I knew I was going to have to be really focused when I came in. When I actually got here, it was harder than I expected. I will say that. It was harder than I expected.

What was the biggest adjustment coming from the pace of New Jersey to Alabama?

Well my father's side of the family is from Alabama (grandmother lives in Wetumpka), so I kind of knew what it was like down here. So, it wasn't a huge culture shock. But it is a whole lot different. If I didn't experience it before, I would have been thrown completely off. But it is different. I enjoy it. It's a little more relaxed. I'm a laid-back type of person. I don't like people running around all the time.

You talked about the support you feel on campus at Alabama. Does that become pressure at any point?

I don't like the word pressure. I see it more as opportunity to show people how good we are and how great of a team we could be. The quote, I think, is "Pressure only exists to those who can't handle it." I feel like at Alabama, it's Alabama. I feel like you can handle any situation that you put us in. Because, one, we prepare for it. And two, it's just a mindset. It's really how you look at it. You can't look at it as pressure … because that's when it breaks you.

What's your favorite stadium to play in other than Bryant-Denny Stadium?

I really liked Tennessee's stadium and the Dallas Cowboys' stadium.

What's it about those two that you enjoy so much?

I like Tennessee's stadium just because of the way it's built. It's kind of like a bowl, so you can see everything around. I didn't like their colors though (laughs). And then the Cowboys' stadium, it's … the Cowboys' stadium. It was extremely nice inside. And LSU is on that list too. That's probably the most fun, besides the national championship game, we had all season was at LSU.

Is there a place you'd like to play one day?

You know, I think it was Virginia Tech and Tennessee in the racetrack (Bristol Motor Speedway). Yeah, I want to do that one day. It looked pretty cool.

WHO WAS THE BEST QUARTERBACK YOU'VE FACED SO FAR?



Deshaun Watson. Simple answer. It was stuff like, we've faced mobile quarterbacks before, but it was the same thing last year. It would look like he was tackled and would get out of it somehow and would either make a really great throw or he'll just make a play with his feet and it was just wearing us out. It was to the point where we'd have to cover for six, seven, eight seconds. You really can't do too much when you're covering for that long.

Who is the best athlete on this Alabama team?

Shoot, we have a whole bunch of athletes. Tony Brown, me, Anthony Averett, Robert Foster, Calvin Ridley, Xavian Marks. We have a whole lot of athletes — different kinds of athletes.

Who was the best receiver you've faced?

Mike Williams (of Clemson). He was a big dude. We kind of took him out of the game in the first half. We were being physical with him, but then we were all tired. He didn't play a lot in the second quarter and came back in the third quarter like a new dude. We were all worn out and he was running around out there full speed doing a 4.3 (40-yard dash) at 6'3". Physical dude. It was a good matchup between our corners and him. We were making plays and he was making plays, but he's a really great receiver.

FCS PREVIEW

BY CRAIG HALEY



LANCE DUNN, NDSU

1. NORTH DAKOTA STATE *(12-2, 7-1 MISSOURI VALLEY)*

The Bison's five-year run as FCS national champions ended against James Madison in the 2016 playoff semifinals, but their dynasty isn't necessarily over because they're strong enough (16 returning starters) to climb back to the top of the mountain. Oh yes, coach Chris Klieman's program is probably a little more motivated this time around. With linebacker Nick DeLuca and defensive tackle Nate Tanguay returning from injuries, the veteran defense is the nation's best and also features defensive end Greg Menard and safety Tre Dempsey among its bruisers. The loss of two starters on the offensive line is a bit of a concern, but quarterback Easton Stick will spread the ball around to running backs Lance Dunn and Bruce Anderson and wide receivers Darrius Shepherd and R.J. Urzendowski. The Bison have won at least a share of six straight Missouri Valley titles and are 83–7 in that time.

MUST-SEE MATCHUPS

AUG. 26	CHATTANOOGA VS. JACKSONVILLE STATE
AUG. 31	RICHMOND AT SAM HOUSTON STATE
SEPT. 9	NORTH DAKOTA STATE AT EASTERN WASHINGTON
SEPT. 30	SAM HOUSTON STATE AT CENTRAL ARKANSAS
OCT. 14	VILLANOVA AT JAMES MADISON
OCT. 28	LEHIGH AT FORDHAM
NOV. 4	CHATTANOOGA AT WOFFORD
NOV. 4	NORTH DAKOTA STATE AT SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
NOV. 11	RICHMOND AT JAMES MADISON
NOV. 11	EASTERN WASHINGTON AT NORTH DAKOTA

Matthew Holst/Getty Images

2. JAMES MADISON
(14-1, 8-0 CAA)
The Dukes captured the 2016 national championship in coach Mike Houston's initial season in Harrisonburg. Despite some key losses, they've reloaded for a shot at capturing back-to-back titles. Clutch quarterback Bryan Schor, the 2016 CAA Offensive Player of the Year, is back as a senior. While 1,800-yard rusher Khalid Abdullah is gone, two-time Georgia Tech leading rusher Marcus Marshall has transferred into a deep backfield alongside running backs Cardon Johnson and Trai Sharpe. The defense features end Andrew Ankrah and safety Raven Greene. The schedule is advantageous, as last year's other top CAA teams have to visit Bridgeforth Stadium. Plus, a season-opening win at East Carolina is possible.

3. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
(9-4, 7-1 MISSOURI VALLEY)
Last year's national quarterfinalists have an FBS-level offense, led by junior quarterback and Missouri Valley Offensive Player of the Year Taryn Christion. His go-to targets, NFL prospects Dallas Goedert (tight end) and Jake Wieneke (wide receiver), combined for 170 receptions, 2,609 receiving yards and 27 touchdown catches in 2016. All-conference linebacker Christian Rozeboom was nearly the National Freshman of the Year, but the defense needs to improve for coach John Stiegelmeier's squad to meet the team's higher expectations.

4. SAM HOUSTON STATE
(12-1, 9-0 SOUTHLAND)
The Bearkats' offense could be the nation's deepest behind senior quarterback Jeremiah Briscoe, who threw an FCS single-season record 57 touchdown passes while winning the 2016 Walter Payton Award. Coach K.C. Keeler's offense has an embarrassment of riches with wide receivers Yedidiah Louis, Davion Davis and Nathan Stewart and running backs Corey Avery and Remus Bulmer. Senior defensive end P.J. Hall and linebacker Justin Johnson must lift a defense that lost six starters. In six straight playoff appearances, the snakebitten Bearkats have been eliminated by four eventual national champs and one national runner-up.

5. NORTH DAKOTA
(9-3, 8-0 BIG SKY)
A Big Sky co-title and first-ever FCS playoff appearance have whet the appetite of a UND program that will move to the Missouri Valley Football Conference in 2020. Safety Cole Reyes, the Big Sky Defensive Player of the Year, joins cornerbacks Deion Harris and Torrey Hunt in a shutdown secondary. Senior quarterback Keaton Studsrud has improved as a passer, but he'll give many handoffs to junior running backs John Santiago and Brady Oliveira and Minnesota transfer James Johannesson.

6. EASTERN WASHINGTON
(12-2, 8-0 BIG SKY)
New coach Aaron Best has spent 20 years in the program, so the Eagles expect a smooth transition following Beau Baldwin's departure to Cal as offensive coordinator. Unfortunately for last year's national semifinalists, the early-season schedule is brutally tough, and all-world wide receiver Cooper Kupp graduated. Junior quarterback Gage Gubrud will make new connections after throwing for an FCS single-season record 5,160 yards as well as 48 TDs.

7. RICHMOND
(10-4, 5-3 CAA)
With coach Danny Rocco off to Delaware, Richmond hired Russ Huesman, the defensive coordinator of the Spiders' 2008 FCS championship team, from Chattanooga. He inherits a ready-to-win team. Two-time 3,000-yard passer Kyle Lauletta is returning from an ACL tear, and he's backed by Kevin Johnson, who helped key a run to the national quarterfinals. Injuries at running back opened the door for Deontez Thompson to surpass 1,000 yards as a redshirt freshman.

FCS ALL-AMERICA TEAM

OFFENSE			
QB	JEREMIAH BRISCOE	6-3/220/SR.	SAM HOUSTON STATE
RB	CHASE EDMONDS	5-9/205/SR.	FORDHAM
RB	ELIJAH IBITOKUN-HANKS	5-9/199/JR.	ALBANY
FB	JOE PROTHEROE	6-0/225/SR.	CAL POLY
WR	JUSTIN WATSON	6-3/210/SR.	PENN
WR	JAKE WIENEKE	6-4/215/SR.	SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
TE	DALLAS GOEDERT	6-5/250/SR.	SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
C	JACOB OHNESORGE	6-3/285/SR.	SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
OL	JUSTIN LEA	6-4/290/SR.	JACKSONVILLE STATE
OL	BRANDON PARKER	6-7/299/SR.	NORTH CAROLINA A&T
OL	TIMON PARRIS	6-5/310/SR.	STONY BROOK
OL	AARON STINNIE	6-5/290/SR.	JAMES MADISON
DEFENSE			
DL	PAT AFRIYIE	6-2/235/SR.	COLGATE
DL	ANTHONY ELLIS	6-1/245/SR.	CHARLESTON SO
DL	P.J. HALL	6-1/280/SR.	SAM HOUSTON STATE
DL	DARIUS JACKSON	6-3/237/SR.	JACKSONVILLE STATE
LB	NICK DELUCA	6-3/240/SR.	NORTH DAKOTA STATE
LB	DARIUS LEONARD	6-3/220/SR.	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
LB	BRETT TAYLOR	6-2/230/SR.	WESTERN ILLINOIS
DB	MARLON BRIDGES	6-1/210/SO.	JACKSONVILLE STATE
DB	TRE DEMPSEY	5-10/184/SR.	NORTH DAKOTA STATE
DB	COLE REYES	6-2/215/SR.	NORTH DAKOTA
DB	ROB ROLLE	6-0/190/SR.	VILLANOVA
SPECIAL TEAMS			
K	LANE CLARK	5-11/170/SR.	TENNESSEE STATE
P	AN BERRYMAN	6-0/205/JR.	WESTERN CAROLINA
KR	JOHN SANTIAGO	5-9/180/JR.	NORTH DAKOTA
PR	KHRIS GARDIN	5-7/164/SR.	NORTH CAROLINA A&T

PROJECTED PLAYOFF QUALIFIERS

ALBANY (AT-LARGE BID)
CAL POLY (AT-LARGE BID)
CENTRAL ARKANSAS (AT-LARGE BID)
CHARLESTON SOUTHERN (BIG SOUTH CHAMP)
CHATTANOOGA (AT-LARGE BID)
DAYTON (PIONEER CHAMP)
DUQUESNE (NEC CHAMP)
EASTERN WASHINGTON (AT-LARGE BID)
FORDHAM (AT-LARGE BID)
JACKSONVILLE STATE (OVC CHAMP)
JAMES MADISON (CAA CHAMP)
LEHIGH (PATRIOT CHAMP)
NEW HAMPSHIRE (AT-LARGE BID)
NORTH DAKOTA (BIG SKY CHAMP)
NORTH DAKOTA STATE (MISSOURI VALLEY CHAMP)
NORTHERN IOWA (AT-LARGE BID)
RICHMOND (AT-LARGE BID)
SAMFORD (AT-LARGE BID)
SAM HOUSTON STATE (SOUTHLAND CHAMP)
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE (AT-LARGE BID)
VILLANOVA (AT-LARGE BID)
WESTERN ILLINOIS (AT-LARGE BID)
WOFFORD (SOUTHERN CHAMP)
YOUNGSTOWN STATE (AT-LARGE BID)



8. VILLANOVA
(9-4, 6-2 CAA)
The post-Andy Talley era begins under new coach Mark Ferrante, an assistant for 30 years. Dual-threat quarterback Zach Bednarczyk is one of nine returning offensive starters, and running backs Aaron Forbes and Matt Gudzak form a dynamic duo. Last year's FCS-leading defense returns safety Rob Rolle, whose seven interceptions tied for the national lead, and linebackers Ed Shockley and Jeff Steeb.

9. JACKSONVILLE STATE
(10-2, 7-0 OHIO VALLEY)
Quarterbacks Bryant Horn and Kendrick Doss hope to replace Eli Jenkins, the key to three straight unbeaten seasons in the OVC. Jenkins' loss means running back Roc Thomas will become the focal point of the offense. An outstanding defense returns eight starters, including the conference's Defensive Player of the Year (end Darius Jackson) and Freshman of the Year (safety Marlon Bridges).

10. WOFFORD
(10-4, 6-2 SOUTHERN)
Having beaten SoCon champion The Citadel in last year's playoffs, the Terriers seek to replace the Bulldogs atop the conference. They're bolstered by a stout defense, including Miles Brown and Tyler Vaughn up front, and two strong QBs to run the triple option, Brandon Goodson and Joe Newman. Coach Mike Ayers, in his 30th season, is three wins shy of 200 at Wofford.

11. NEW HAMPSHIRE
(8-5, 6-2 CAA)
A season opener against archrival Maine could jump-start the Wildcats to a 14th straight playoff appearance under coach Sean McDonnell. They need steadier play out of junior quarterback Trevor Knight, who has excellent wide receivers in Malik Love and Neil O'Connor. The future is now in the secondary with sophomores Pop Lacey and Prince Smith Jr., last year's CAA Defensive Rookie of the Year.

12. LEHIGH
(9-3, 6-0 PATRIOT)
Quarterback Brad Mayes is thrilled to have the keys to the offense because the defending Patriot League champ returns a two-time 1,000-yard rusher, Dom Bragalone, and last year's two 1,000-yard receivers, Troy Pelletier and Gatlin Casey — a trio that combined to score 42 touchdowns. Still, the Mountain Hawks have to face fellow league powers Colgate and Fordham on the road.

13. NORTHERN IOWA
(5-6, 4-4 MISSOURI VALLEY)
One of the more disappointing teams in the FCS last season (preseason No. 3) seeks to make amends. While 2016 Buck Buchanan Award winner Karter Schult graduated, the Panthers return 16 starters. A veteran offensive line will protect junior quarterback Eli Dunne. Senior linebacker Jared Farley, son of coach Mark Farley, headlines the defense.

14. YOUNGSTOWN STATE
(12-4, 6-2 MISSOURI VALLEY)
The former FCS power in the 1990s ended a 10-year playoff drought by reaching the national championship game, where the Penguins fell to James Madison. Despite losing a lot of talent, they hope to become a consistent winner under coach Bo Pelini. Quarterback Hunter Wells and running back Tevin McCaster took big steps forward down the stretch.

15. CHATTANOOGA
(9-4, 6-2 SOUTHERN)
New coach Tom Arth has made the jump from Division III John Carroll, where he knocked off both Mount Union and Wisconsin-Whitewater last year. His Mocs are retooling after losing six starters on each side of the ball, but the return of seniors Alejandro Bennifield (quarterback) and Richardre Bagley (running back) provide a good start. The Mocs have won 26 of their last 31 SoCon games.

16. CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
(7-4, 4-1 BIG SOUTH)
FBS-bound Liberty's ineligibility in the Big South race makes it easier for the Buccaneers to claim a three-peat. Mark Tucker is the new coach following Jamey Chadwell's departure to Coastal Carolina as offensive coordinator. Losses at running back mean sophomore quarterback Shane Bucenell must mature quickly. Defensive end Anthony Ellis and linebacker Solomon Brown fuel an excellent front seven.

Edmonds: Fordham Athletics; Chattanooga: Billy Weeks

17. CENTRAL ARKANSAS
(10-3, 8-1 SOUTHLAND)
The defense was formidable in the Bears' playoff season a year ago, and All-Southland picks George Odum and Tremon Smith return to the secondary. But the offense is primed to reach a higher level because it returns underrated quarterback Hayden Hildebrand, a stable of quality running backs and all five starters on the offensive line. The Bears will face most of the Southland powers at home.

18. SAMFORD
(7-5, 5-3 SOUTHERN)
SoCon Offensive Player of the Year Devlin Hodges passed for 4,088 yards and 36 touchdowns as a sophomore last season, and he pairs again with wide receiver Kelvin McKnight. While the Bulldogs need to improve their rushing attack, they should stop the run with a solid defensive line, backed by linebacker Shaheed Salmon and cornerback Omari Williams.

19. WESTERN ILLINOIS
(6-5, 3-5 MISSOURI VALLEY)
A 5–1 start last season, including an upset of Northern Illinois, fell apart on the Leathernecks. They return 18 starters, including the 1-2 offensive punch of quarterback Sean McGuire and running back Steve McShane, but the team's best player is All-America linebacker Brett Taylor. As a junior, he ranked No. 3 in the FCS in tackles.

20. ALBANY
(7-4, 4-4 CAA)
A return to form by junior running back Elijah Ibitokun-Hanks (1,401 rushing yards, 16 TDs), who suffered a torn ACL in the season's final game, is vital for the Great Danes as they come off their best season since joining the CAA in 2013. They need improved play at quarterback to avoid being one of the last two teams left out of the playoff field again.

21. FORDHAM
(8-3, 5-1 PATRIOT)
Denied an at-large playoff bid in 2016, the Rams want to go back in as the Patriot League champs in 2017. Senior running back Chase Edmonds (5,285 rushing yards, 69 TDs) is ready to cap a scintillating career. Opposing defenses can't just concentrate on him, though, because fifth-year senior Kevin Anderson was the league's passing leader a year ago.

22. CAL POLY
(7-5, 5-3 BIG SKY)
The Mustangs' triple option will rank among the nation's best rushing offenses with the return of All-America fullback Joe Protheroe, slot back Kyle Lewis and an experienced offensive line. Coach Tim Walsh's squad seeks a return to the FCS playoffs, but it needs improvement against the pass. It should come with the return of senior safety B.J. Nard.

23. LIBERTY
(6-5, 4-1 BIG SOUTH)
Coach Turner Gill's squad is ineligible for the Big South title and FCS playoffs while they transition toward FBS independence in 2018, but they'll have a strong team nonetheless. Last year's youthful offense will come of age behind sophomore quarterback Stephen Calvert, while the defense has a senior standout in defensive end Juwan Wells. The special teams are outstanding.

24. McNEESE
(6-5, 5-4 SOUTHLAND)
The Cowboys have posted 12 straight winning seasons, but they're seeking significant improvement in coach Lance Guidry's second season in Lake Charles, La. The offense is diverse, led by quarterback James Tabary, who is coming off a 3,000-yard season, and senior running back Ryan Ross. The defense returns its top seven tacklers, including Jammerio Gross and Chris Livings, who anchor the defensive line.

25. THE CITADEL
(10-2, 8-0 SOUTHERN)
A handful of potential returning starters departed in the offseason, including two-time All-America cornerback Dee Delaney, who left via a graduate transfer to Miami (Fla.) and is a projected starter for the Canes. The losses severely dampen the Bulldogs' bid to win a third straight SoCon title. Triple-option quarterback Dominique Allen is back to guide last year's FCS-leading rushing attack, and safety Kailik Williams is the unquestioned leader in the secondary.



CHASE EDMONDS, FORDHAM

ACC PREVIEW



DEONDRE FRANCOIS

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	ATLANTIC	COASTAL
1	FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES 12-1, 8-0	MIAMI HURRICANES 9-4, 5-3
2	CLEMSON TIGERS 10-2, 6-2	VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES 9-3, 5-3
3	LOUISVILLE CARDINALS 9-3, 5-3	PITTSBURGH PANTHERS 7-5, 5-3
4	NC STATE WOLFPACK 7-5, 4-4	GEORGIA TECH YELLOW JACKETS 7-5, 4-4
5	WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS 6-6, 3-5	NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS 7-5, 4-4
6	SYRACUSE ORANGE 5-7, 2-6	DUKE BLUE DEVILS 4-8, 2-6
7	BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES 5-7, 2-6	VIRGINIA CAVALIERS 3-9, 1-7

ACC Championship: Florida State over Miami

2016 BOWL RESULTS

National Championship Game: Clemson 35, Alabama 31
Fiesta Bowl: Clemson 31, Ohio State 0
Orange Bowl: Florida State 33, Michigan 32
Citrus Bowl: LSU 29, Louisville 9
TaxSlayer Bowl: Georgia Tech 33, Kentucky 18
Russell Athletic Bowl: Miami 31, West Virginia 14
Belk Bowl: Virginia Tech 35, Arkansas 24
Sun Bowl: Stanford 25, North Carolina 23
Pinstripe Bowl: Northwestern 31, Pittsburgh 24
Independence Bowl: NC State 41, Vanderbilt 17
Military Bowl: Wake Forest 34, Temple 26
Quick Lane Bowl: Boston College 36, Maryland 30

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Rose Bowl (CFP): Florida State vs. Ohio State
Orange Bowl: Clemson vs. Penn State
Belk Bowl: Louisville vs. Florida
Citrus Bowl: Miami vs. Georgia
TaxSlayer Bowl: Virginia Tech vs. Mississippi State
Sun Bowl: NC State vs. UCLA
Independence Bowl: Pittsburgh vs. Texas A&M
Military Bowl: Georgia Tech vs. Navy
Pinstripe Bowl: North Carolina vs. Nebraska
Quick Lane Bowl: Wake Forest vs. Michigan State

Francois: John Sommers II; Jackson: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2016 ACC STANDINGS

ATLANTIC	ACC	OVERALL
CLEMSON	7-1	14-1
LOUISVILLE	7-1	9-4
FLORIDA STATE	5-3	10-3
NC STATE	3-5	7-6
WAKE FOREST	3-5	7-6
BOSTON COLLEGE	2-6	7-6
SYRACUSE	2-6	4-8

COASTAL	ACC	OVERALL
VIRGINIA TECH	6-2	10-4
MIAMI	5-3	9-4
NORTH CAROLINA	5-3	8-5
PITTSBURGH	5-3	8-5
GEORGIA TECH	4-4	9-4
DUKE	1-7	4-8
VIRGINIA	1-7	2-10

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. Florida State
2. Miami
3. Clemson
4. Virginia Tech
5. North Carolina
6. Louisville
7. Pittsburgh
8. Georgia Tech
9. Duke
10. NC State
11. Syracuse
12. Virginia
13. Wake Forest
14. Boston College

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
BOSTON COLLEGE	14	6	12	11	5	8	10
CLEMSON	4	5	1	1	1	4	3
DUKE	6	11	8	9	13	6	14
FLORIDA STATE	2	1	3	5	2	3	1
GEORGIA TECH	9	3	14	4	11	12	5
LOUISVILLE	1	8	2	10	8	5	4
MIAMI	10	4	4	7	3	2	7
NORTH CAROLINA	11	13	10	8	9	11	6
NC STATE	5	9	6	3	4	10	9
PITTSBURGH	7	2	5	2	10	13	8
SYRACUSE	3	12	7	12	14	7	12
VIRGINIA	12	14	13	13	12	9	13
VIRGINIA TECH	8	7	9	6	6	1	2
WAKE FOREST	13	10	11	14	7	14	11



LAMAR JACKSON

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Lamar Jackson	6-3	200	Jr.	Louisville
RB	Dedrick Mills	5-10	217	So.	Georgia Tech
RB	Mark Walton	5-9	205	Jr.	Miami
AP	Jaylen Samuels	5-11	223	Sr.	NC State
WR	Deon Cain	6-1	210	Jr.	Clemson
WR	Ahmmon Richards	6-1	190	So.	Miami
TE	Christopher Herndon IV	6-4	252	Sr.	Miami
OL	Tony Adams	6-2	322	Sr.	NC State
OL	Tyrone Crowder	6-2	340	Sr.	Clemson
OL	Mitch Hyatt	6-5	295	Jr.	Clemson
OL	Brian O'Neill	6-6	300	Jr.	Pittsburgh
OL	Wyatt Teller	6-5	308	Sr.	Virginia Tech

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Bradley Chubb	6-4	275	Sr.	NC State
DL	Harold Landry	6-3	250	Sr.	Boston College
DL	Dexter Lawrence	6-5	340	So.	Clemson
DL	Christian Wilkins	6-4	310	Jr.	Clemson
LB	Tremaine Edmunds	6-5	236	Jr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Micah Kiser	6-2	240	Sr.	Virginia
LB	Stacy Thomas	6-1	240	Sr.	Louisville
CB	Jaire Alexander	5-11	192	Jr.	Louisville
CB	Tarvarus McFadden	6-2	198	Jr.	Florida State
S	Quin Blanding	6-2	215	Sr.	Virginia
S	Derwin James	6-3	211	So.	Florida State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Michael Badgley	5-10	178	Sr.	Miami
P	Sterling Hofrichter	5-9	198	So.	Syracuse
KR	Quadree Henderson	5-8	190	Jr.	Pittsburgh
PR	Braxton Berrios	5-9	186	Sr.	Miami

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Deondre Francois	6-2	205	So.	Florida State
RB	Cam Akers	5-11	213	Fr.	Florida State
RB	Jacques Patrick	6-2	231	Jr.	Florida State
AP	Quadree Henderson	5-8	190	Jr.	Pittsburgh
WR	Nyqwan Murray	5-11	176	Jr.	Florida State
WR	Cam Phillips	6-0	199	Sr.	Virginia Tech
TE	Cam Serigne	6-3	250	Sr.	Wake Forest
OL	Parker Braun	6-3	280	So.	Georgia Tech
OL	Geron Christian	6-6	318	Jr.	Louisville
OL	Austin Davis	6-4	290	Sr.	Duke
OL	Alex Officer	6-4	335	Sr.	Pittsburgh
OL	Bentley Spain	6-6	300	Sr.	North Carolina

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Duke Ejiofor	6-4	270	Sr.	Wake Forest
DL	Clelin Ferrell	6-5	265	So.	Clemson
DL	Derrick Nnadi	6-1	312	Sr.	Florida State
DL	Josh Sweat	6-5	250	Jr.	Florida State
LB	Kendall Joseph	6-0	230	Jr.	Clemson
LB	Andrew Motuapuaka	6-0	233	Sr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Shaq Quarterman	6-1	240	So.	Miami
CB	M.J. Stewart	6-0	200	Sr.	North Carolina
CB	Greg Stroman	6-0	180	Sr.	Virginia Tech
S	Jessie Bates III	6-2	200	So.	Wake Forest
S	Jordan Whitehead	5-11	190	Jr.	Pittsburgh

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Mike Weaver	6-1	195	Sr.	Wake Forest
P	Tom Sheldon	6-3	200	So.	North Carolina
KR	Joe Reed	6-3	210	So.	Virginia
PR	Quadree Henderson	5-8	190	Jr.	Pittsburgh

BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **70** • ACC ATLANTIC PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 2-6 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Northern Illinois	
Sept. 9	Wake Forest	
Sept. 16	Notre Dame	
Sept. 23	at Clemson	
Sept. 30	Central Michigan	
Oct. 7	Virginia Tech	
Oct. 14	at Louisville	
Oct. 21	at Virginia	
Oct. 27	Florida State	
Nov. 11	NC State	
Nov. 18	vs. Connecticut #	
Nov. 25	at Syracuse	

#Boston, MA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 2-6 ACC

Sept. 3	vs. Georgia Tech #	L	14-17
Sept. 10	vs. Massachusetts %	W	26-7
Sept. 17	at Virginia Tech	L	0-49
Sept. 24	Wagner	W	42-10
Oct. 1	Buffalo	W	35-3
Oct. 7	Clemson	L	10-56
Oct. 22	Syracuse	L	20-28
Oct. 29	at NC State	W	21-14
Nov. 5	Louisville	L	7-52
Nov. 11	at Florida State	L	7-45
Nov. 19	Connecticut	W	30-0
Nov. 26	at Wake Forest	W	17-14
Dec. 26	vs. Maryland &	W	36-30

#Dublin, Ireland %Foxboro &Quick Lane Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. A.J. Dillon, RB, New London, CT
2. Brandon Sebastian, DB, West Haven, CT
3. Benjamin Petrula, OL, Freehold, NJ
4. Travis Levy, RB, Olney, MD
5. Ben Stewart, DB, Indianapolis, IN
6. Caleb Stoneburner, WR, Dublin, OH
7. Jahmin Muse, DB, Elizabeth, NJ
8. Isaiah McDuffie, LB, Buffalo, NY
9. CJ Lewis, ATH, Hamden, CT
10. Paul Theobald Jr., LB, Caldwell, NJ

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.4 ppg	13	118
Rushing	149.1 ypg	10	96
Passing	143.8 ypg	13	120
Total	292.8 ypg	14	127
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.0 ppg	9	44
Rushing	108.5 ypg	1	7
Passing	205.6 ypg	4	34
Total	314.2 ypg	2	9
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+7	+0.54	3	24

STAT CORNER

-1.1

BC averaged just 3.7 points per trip inside the opponent's 40 and allowed 4.8. That minus-1.1 point margin ranked 123rd in FBS.

OFFENSE There were glimmers of hope for Boston College in its Quick Lane Bowl win over Maryland, where offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler showed some up-tempo looks and more creativity, traits that have been sorely lacking in this program in recent years. And even though quarterback Patrick Towles graduated, there is some hope for improvement overall with a mix of experience and infusion of young talent.

It begins with Anthony Brown, a redshirt freshman quarterback who just might be the answer with his dual-threat ability. He impressed last season in practices and is expected to hold off junior Darius Wade for the starting position. Overall, don't look for Loeffler to re-invent the wheel with the offense, which will still be run-first behind backs like Jon Hilliman and Davon Jones. Watch out for true freshman A.J. Dillon, though, whom the Eagles swiped from Michigan close to National Signing Day.

The receiving group returns largely intact, as Michael Walker and Jeff Smith will be the main targets, but much will hinge on the play of the offensive line, which has underperformed the last two seasons. Three starters return, so there are no excuses for the unit not to take significant steps forward.

DEFENSE Defensive end Harold Landry could have entered the NFL Draft and garnered a high pick after leading the nation in sacks last year with 16.5, but he is back, and the Eagles likely will field another strong front seven because of it. Although he did not start last year, fellow defensive end Zach Allen was a key contributor and gives the Eagles two solid bookends.

The linebackers will also be a strong point even with the graduation of Matt Milano. Middle linebacker Connor Strachan led the team in tackles a year ago and is a terror both against the run and as a blitzer. This is a team that has been among the best in the nation against the run in recent years, and don't expect that to change.

The secondary is where the Eagles need the most improvement, as the overall speed has had trouble matching up with the top-level receiving corps in the ACC. Safety John Johnson leaves a hole, but three other starters return, including both cornerbacks. The Eagles have also begun to build some decent depth at those positions, so improvement against the pass is possible. Perhaps the defensive backfield's best friend will be a pass rush that figures to be among the best in the league.

SPECIALISTS At the beginning of last season, the Eagles were dreadful in the kicking game, which likely cost them the opener against Georgia Tech. But they smoothed things out by putting Mike Knoll in that role, as he hit 12-of-14 field-goal attempts. Don't expect fireworks out of the return game, but Walker should be adequate there.

FINAL ANALYSIS Coach Steve Addazio was squarely on the hot seat after his team dropped to 4–6 last year and suffered back-to-back losses to Louisville and Florida State by a combined 97–14 margin. But the Eagles earned wins over Wake Forest, UConn and Maryland, and Addazio had his third bowl trip in four seasons, a feat that is well within reach this season as well.

New athletic director Martin Jarmond will certainly give his own assessment of the state of the program, but right now Addazio seems to have the Eagles in that second tier of the Atlantic Division behind the likes of Florida State, Clemson and Louisville.

Is that BC's ceiling under Addazio? It could be. As experienced as the Eagles are this season, don't expect them to break that barrier just yet.



HAROLD LANDRY

"They just don't have the same kind of skill players that other schools in the league have, but they're very sound in what they do."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	3	**Michael Walker (Jr.)**	**83**	**Charlie Callinan (Sr.)**	
WR	6	Jeff Smith (Jr.)	81	Thadd Smith (Sr.)	
LT		Marcell Lazard (Sr.)	67	Aaron Monteiro (Jr.)	
LG	67	**Aaron Monteiro (Jr.)**	65	Ryan Conte (Jr.)	
C	77	**Jon Baker (Sr.)**	59	Shane Leonard (Fr.)	
RG	70	John Phillips (So.)	69	Austin Stephens (Jr.)	
RT	75	**Chris Lindstrom (Jr.)**	73	Sam Schmal (Sr.)	
TE	89	**Tommy Sweeney (Jr.)**	85	Korab Idrizi (So.)	
QB	13	Anthony Brown (Fr.)	4	Darius Wade (Jr.)	
RB	32	**Jon Hilliman (Jr.)**	16	Davon Jones (So.)	
FB	46	Jimmy Martin (So.)	38	Richard Wilson (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	7	**Harold Landry (Sr.)**	11	Wyatt Ray (Jr.)
DT	94	Noa Merritt (Sr.)	92	Kevin Cohee (Jr.)
DT	96	**Ray Smith (Jr.)**	98	Jack Kenny (Sr.)
DE	2	Zach Allen (Jr.)	11	Wyatt Ray (Jr.)
OLB	49	Kevin Bletzer (Jr.)	26	Sharrieff Grice (Jr.)
MLB	13	**Connor Strachan (Sr.)**	45	Ethan Tucky (Fr.)
OLB	10	**Ty Schwab (Sr.)**	46	Jimmy Martin (So.)
CB	20	**Isaac Yiadom (Sr.)**	14	Gabriel McClary (Sr.)
CB	5	**Kamrin Moore (Sr.)**	21	Lukas Denis (Jr.)
SS	8	**Will Harris (Jr.)**	25	Mehdi El Attrach (So.)
FS	29	Atem Ntantang (Sr.)	25	Mehdi El Attrach (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Mike Knoll (Sr.)	KR	3	Michael Walker (Jr.)
P	98	Mike Knoll (Sr.)	PR	3	Michael Walker (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Darius Wade, 9-19-100-1, 0 TD
Rushing: Jon Hilliman, 184 att., 542 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Michael Walker, 33 rec., 420 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Connor Strachan, 80
Sacks: Harold Landry, 16.5
Interceptions: Will Harris, 2; Kamrin Moore, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Steve Addazio
Record at School: 24–27 (4 years)
Career Record: 37-38 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Scot Loeffler
Defensive Coordinator: Jim Reid
Chestnut Hill, MA • Alumni Stadium (44,500)

Margaret Bowles

CLEMSON TIGERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **7** • ACC ATLANTIC PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **10-2, 6-2 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Kent State	
Sept. 9	Auburn	
Sept. 16	at Louisville	
Sept. 23	Boston College	
Sept. 30	at Virginia Tech	
Oct. 7	Wake Forest	
Oct. 13	at Syracuse	
Oct. 28	Georgia Tech	
Nov. 4	at NC State	
Nov. 11	Florida State	
Nov. 18	The Citadel	
Nov. 25	at South Carolina	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 14-1, 7-1 ACC

Sept. 3	at Auburn		W	19-13
Sept. 10	Troy		W	40-34
Sept. 17	South Carolina State		W	59-0
Sept. 22	at Georgia Tech		W	26-7
Oct. 1	Louisville		W	42-36
Oct. 7	at Boston College		W	56-10
Oct. 15	NC State	(ot)	W	24-17
Oct. 29	at Florida State		W	37-34
Nov. 5	Syracuse		W	54-0
Nov. 12	Pittsburgh		L	42-43
Nov. 19	at Wake Forest		W	35-13
Nov. 26	South Carolina		W	56-7
Dec. 3	vs. Virginia Tech #		W	42-35
Dec. 31	vs. Ohio State %		W	31-0
Jan. 9	vs. Alabama $		W	35-31

#Orlando %Fiesta Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal
$CFB Playoff National Championship

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tee Higgins, WR, Oak Ridge, TN
2. Hunter Johnson, QB, Brownsburg, IN
3. A.J. Terrell, CB, Atlanta, GA
4. Amari Rodgers, WR, Knoxville, TN
5. Justin Foster, DE, Shelby, NC
6. Jordan Williams, DE, Virginia Beach, VA
7. LeAnthony Williams Jr., CB, Roswell, GA
8. Travis Etienne Jr., RB, Jennings LA
9. Matt Bockhorst, OG, Cincinnati, OH
10. Chase Brice, QB, Loganville, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.2 ppg	3	14
Rushing	169.7 ypg	6	71
Passing	333.9 ypg	1	7
Total	503.7 ypg	2	12
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	18.0 ppg	1	10
Rushing	129.6 ypg	6	24
Passing	181.9 ypg	2	14
Total	311.5 ypg	1	8
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.07	8	71

STAT CORNER

6.2/8.2

Clemson's average third-down distance to go was 6.2 yards (ninth in FBS). On defense: 8.2 (sixth). Own third downs, win a ring.

OFFENSE Clemson's offense played a key role in its first national title since 1981; the Tigers averaged 39.2 points and 503.7 yards per game. But Dabo Swinney and his staff face some major challenges in keeping the unit as potent as ever. Gone are Heisman Trophy runner-up Deshaun Watson, one of the best players in program history, tailback Wayne Gallman (1,133 yards, 17 touchdowns) and three of the top four pass catchers, including Mike Williams (98 catches for 1,361 yards and 11 touchdowns) and one of the nation's top tight ends in Jordan Leggett.

Junior Kelly Bryant, redshirt freshman Zerrick Cooper and five-star true freshman Hunter Johnson (an early enrollee) spent spring battling to replace Watson. All three are mobile passers, and while Bryant is the favorite to start, it wouldn't be a surprise to see the strong, accurate Johnson push to replace him. In the backfield, sturdy C.J. Fuller will get first crack at carries, but if gamebreaking sophomore Tavien Feaster gets better without the ball, he's a star in waiting. Junior Deon Cain (38 catches, 724 yards, nine touchdowns as a sophomore) is an excellent deep threat, and Ray-Ray McCloud will fill the shoes of speedy Artavis Scott. Former walk-on and national championship hero Hunter Renfrow is the Tigers' most dependable receiver.

The offensive line will be a cornerstone for the unit. Four starters return, led by All-ACC left tackle Mitch Hyatt and All-ACC right guard Tyrone Crowder. There's plenty of offensive talent, but the question is how it will all fall into place.

DEFENSE Brent Venables has turned Clemson's defense from a liability into one of the nation's best. The Tigers were a top-10 scoring and total defense last fall, yielding 18.0 points and 311.5 yards per game. While there are a few key questions, the group should be a strength again in 2017, with a nasty defensive line as an excellent foundation.

Junior Christian Wilkins, who had 13.0 tackles for a loss last fall, will form one of the nation's best defensive tandems alongside Dexter Lawrence, who looked NFL-ready as a true freshman. Clelin Ferrell looks to build on a breakout College Football Playoff as Clemson's next great defensive end. Ben Boulware's graduation after piling up 131 tackles will be felt, but junior Kendall Joseph, coming off a 124-tackle season, will be a capable replacement in the middle. Senior Dorian O'Daniel and sophomore James Skalski are athletic talents who'll flank him quite well.

Seniors Ryan Carter and Marcus Edmond provide veteran leadership at cornerback, and watch out for Mark Fields and sophomore Trayvon Mullen, who emerged as a starter alongside Carter ahead of Edmond in spring. At strong safety, sophomore Tanner Muse appears to be in line to replace graduated Jadar Johnson.

SPECIALISTS Greg Huegel returns as one of the ACC's most reliable kickers after hitting 14-of-19 field goals and 71-of-73 extra points. But Clemson needs to find a punter as well as a new long snapper and holder. Will Spiers, Michael Batson and Carson King competed this spring to replace steady punter Andy Teasdall. McCloud and Feaster are capable kick returners.

FINAL ANALYSIS Clemson reached college football's pinnacle with its win over Alabama, but staying there won't be easy. Over the last 25 years, only two teams (Alabama and Nebraska) have repeated as consensus national champions. The Tigers must overcome significant offensive skill position losses as well as the graduation of Boulware, the emotional leader of the defense. The schedule sets up well, with Auburn and Florida State at home, but given the offensive uncertainty, it wouldn't be a surprise to see a very slight step back this fall.



CHRISTIAN WILKINS

"They'll steal your signals. People don't want to talk about it, but the teams that gave them fits were NC State and Pitt, because they huddled."
– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	8	Deon Cain (Jr.)	1	Trevion Thompson (Jr.)
WR	34	Ray-Ray McCloud (Jr.)	17	Cornell Powell (So.)
WR	13	**Hunter Renfrow (Jr.)**	18	T.J. Chase (Fr.)
LT	75	**Mitch Hyatt (Jr.)**	73	Tremayne Anchrum (So.)
LG	51	**Taylor Hearn (Jr.)**	74	John Simpson (So.)
C	50	Justin Falcinelli (Jr.)	59	Gage Cervenka (So.)
RG	55	**Tyrone Crowder (Sr.)**	69	Maverick Morris (Sr.)
RT	76	**Sean Pollard (So.)**	72	Blake Vinson (Fr.)
TE	80	Milan Richard (Jr.)	84	Cannon Smith (Jr.)
QB	2	Kelly Bryant (Jr.)	15	Hunter Johnson (Fr.)
RB	27	C.J. Fuller (Jr.)	28	Tavien Feaster (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	99	**Clelin Ferrell (So.)**	49	Richard Yeargin (Jr.)
DT	42	**Christian Wilkins (Jr.)**	67	Albert Huggins (Jr.)
DT	90	**Dexter Lawrence (So.)**	44	Nyles Pinckney (Fr.)
DE	91	Austin Bryant (Jr.)	45	Chris Register (Jr.)
WLB	47	James Skalski (So.)	5	Shaq Smith (Fr.)
MLB	34	**Kendall Joseph (Jr.)**	57	Tre Lamar (So.)
SLB	6	**Dorian O'Daniel (Sr.)**	30	Jalen Williams (Jr.)
CB	1	Trayvon Mullen (So.)	2	Mark Fields (Jr.)
CB	31	**Ryan Carter (Sr.)**	29	Marcus Edmond (Sr.)
S	23	**Van Smith (Jr.)**	15	Korrin Wiggins (Sr.)
S	19	Tanner Muse (So.)	12	K'Von Wallace (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Greg Huegel (Jr.)	KR	27	C.J. Fuller (Jr.)
P	48	Will Spiers (Fr.)	PR	34	Ray-Ray McCloud (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kelly Bryant, 9-6-48-0, 1 TD
Rushing: Tavien Feaster, 37 att., 221 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Ray-Ray McCloud, 49 rec., 472 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Kendall Joseph, 124
Sacks: Clelin Ferrell, 6.0
Interceptions: Van Smith, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dabo Swinney
Record at School: 89-28 (8+ years)
Career Record: 89-28 (8+ years)
Co-Offensive Coordinators: Tony Elliott, Jeff Scott
Defensive Coordinator: Brent Venables
Clemson, SC • Clemson Memorial Stadium (81,500)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **3** • ACC ATLANTIC PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **12-1, 8-0 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Alabama #	
Sept. 9	UL Monroe	
Sept. 16	Miami	
Sept. 23	NC State	
Sept. 30	at Wake Forest	
Oct. 14	at Duke	
Oct. 21	Louisville	
Oct. 27	at Boston College	
Nov. 4	Syracuse	
Nov. 11	at Clemson	
Nov. 18	Delaware State	
Nov. 25	at Florida	

#Atlanta, GA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 5-3 ACC

Sept. 5	vs. Ole Miss #	W	45-34
Sept. 10	Charleston Southern	W	52-8
Sept. 17	at Louisville	L	20-63
Sept. 24	at South Florida	W	55-35
Oct. 1	North Carolina	L	35-37
Oct. 8	at Miami	W	20-19
Oct. 15	Wake Forest	W	17-6
Oct. 29	Clemson	L	34-37
Nov. 5	at NC State	W	24-20
Nov. 11	Boston College	W	45-7
Nov. 19	at Syracuse	W	45-14
Nov. 26	Florida	W	31-13
Dec. 30	vs. Michigan %	W	33-32

#Orlando %Orange Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Cam Akers, RB, Clinton, MS
2. Marvin Wilson, DT, Houston, TX
3. Joshua Kaindoh, DE, Baltimore, MD
4. Khalan Laborn, RB, Ocean Lakes, VA
5. Stanford Samuels III, CB, Hollywood, FL
6. D.J. Matthews, WR, Jacksonville, FL
7. Cyrus Fagan, S, Daytona Beach, FL
8. Hamsah Nasirildeen, DB, Concord, NC
9. Ja'len Parks, DL, Newberry, FL
10. Zaquandre White, RB, North Fort Myers, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.1 ppg	4	31
Rushing	202.3 ypg	4	40
Passing	264.1 ypg	6	33
Total	466.4 ypg	3	25
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.0 ppg	9	44
Rushing	128.0 ypg	5	21
Passing	221.1 ypg	7	57
Total	349.1 ypg	6	22
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	5	42

STAT CORNER

14.4/10.5

FSU games featured plenty of sacks. The Seminoles had a 14.4 percent sack rate on passing downs (fifth) and allowed a 10.5 percent rate (33rd).

OFFENSE After passing for 3,350 yards and 20 touchdowns as a redshirt freshman, quarterback Deondre Francois likely will be tasked with taking on an even larger role in the Seminoles' offense this season. Gone is star tailback Dalvin Cook, top wide receiver Travis Rudolph and standout left tackle Rod Johnson. Fortunately for FSU, head coach Jimbo Fisher believes Francois is the type of quarterback he can build his offense around.

"The year he had, this guy's a big-time player," says Fisher, whose first three QBs at Florida State — Christian Ponder, EJ Manuel and Jameis Winston — all went on to be first-round NFL Draft picks.

The Seminoles will want to see Francois process reads quicker and get the ball out of his hands earlier. He also will look to improve upon his completion percentage (58.7), and the Seminoles likely will rely more on his running skills. Francois will be surrounded by a group that is long on talent but short on experience.

Junior wideout Nyqwan Murray has legitimate star potential, as he showed with two scores against Michigan in the Orange Bowl. But there undoubtedly will be a drop-off at running back with the departure of Cook, the school's all-time leading rusher. Junior Jacques Patrick averaged 5.7 yards per carry as a backup in 2016, and celebrated freshman Cam Akers wowed teammates and coaches in spring drills. The biggest question mark will be a rebuilt offensive line, which will have to be much better than a year ago for the Seminoles to become a legitimate title contender.

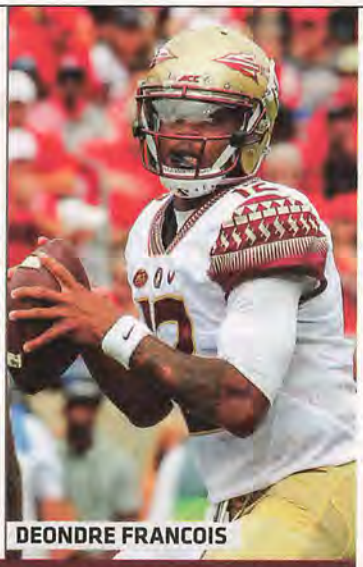
DEFENSE Three returning starters up front provide the nucleus of what could be one of the nation's deepest defensive line rotations. The Noles must fill a huge void left by defensive end DeMarcus Walker (16.0 sacks), but Josh Sweat and Brian Burns combined for 16.5 sacks of their own last fall. FSU's coaches believe they have enough quality depth to go three-deep at all four spots and wear down opposing offenses.

The Seminoles are perhaps even more well stocked in the secondary, where All-America safety Derwin James returns from a season-ending knee injury last September. James is joined by several other DBs with starting experience, including junior cornerback Tarvarus McFadden, who tied for first nationally with eight interceptions in 2016. Starting linebackers Matthew Thomas and Ro'Derrick Hoskins are both seniors, and the Seminoles have more depth at that position than they've enjoyed in years.

SPECIALISTS The good news is that the Seminoles return placekicker Ricky Aguayo and punter Logan Tyler. The bad news is that both were extremely inconsistent as freshmen last fall. Aguayo, the younger brother of former Lou Groza Award winner Roberto Aguayo, struggled mightily with kicks beyond 40 yards; he was perfect on all 12 kicks inside the 40 but only 7-of-14 from that point and beyond. Tyler averaged a pedestrian 40.3 yards per punt and seldom delivered great hang time. FSU's coaches were encouraged, however, by his improvement in the spring.

FINAL ANALYSIS Despite a somewhat disappointing 10–3 campaign in 2016, the Seminoles again will begin the season with sky-high aspirations. They bring back nearly everyone from a defense that ranked in the top 25 nationally, as well as a talented quarterback in Francois and some dynamic skill players.

If the offensive line can jell in time for a season-opening clash with Alabama in Atlanta, the Seminoles could be a legitimate national championship contender. A loss there wouldn't knock them out of the race, but the remaining schedule is daunting with road trips to Clemson and Florida in a span of 14 days in November.



DEONDRE FRANCOIS

"People are going to see they got a special guy in Cam Akers. I think he's every bit as fast as Dalvin Cook, but he's probably a more fluid athlete."
– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	8	Nyqwan Murray (Jr.)	11	George Campbell (So.)	
WR	18	Auden Tate (Jr.)	5	Da'Vante Phillips (Jr.)	
WR	89	Keith Gavin (So.)		D.J. Matthews (Fr.)	
LT	79	Josh Ball (Fr.)	73	Jauan Williams (Fr.)	
LG	70	Cole Minshew (So.)	62	Ethan Frith (Jr.)	
C	54	**Alec Eberle (Jr.)**	51	Baveon Johnson (Fr.)	
RG	69	**Landon Dickerson (So.)**	74	Derrick Kelly II (Jr.)	
RT	76	Rick Leonard (Sr.)	71	**Brock Ruble (Jr.)**	
TE	81	**Ryan Izzo (Jr.)**	88	Mavin Saunders (Jr.)	
QB	12	**Deondre Francois (So.)**	16	J.J. Cosentino (Jr.)	
RB	9	Jacques Patrick (Jr.)	3	Cam Akers (Fr.)	

DEFENSE (9)

DE	9	**Josh Sweat (Jr.)**	84	Jalen Wilkerson (So.)
DT	91	**Derrick Nnadi (Sr.)**	55	Fredrick Jones (Jr.)
DT	90	**Demarcus Christmas (Jr.)**	94	Walvenski Aimé (Jr.)
DE	99	Brian Burns (So.)	13	Joshua Kaindoh (Fr.)
LB	6	**Matthew Thomas (Sr.)**	56	Emmett Rice (So.)
LB	18	**Ro'Derrick Hoskins (Sr.)**	5	Dontavious Jackson (So.)
LB	16	**Jacob Pugh (Sr.)**	51	Josh Brown (So.)
CB	4	**Tarvarus McFadden (Jr.)**	1	Levonta Taylor (So.)
CB	37	Kyle Meyers (So.)	15	Carlos Becker (So.)
FS	3	Derwin James (So.)	7	Ermon Lane (Sr.)
SS	20	**Trey Marshall (Sr.)**	19	**A.J. Westbrook (Jr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	23	Ricky Aguayo (So.)	KR	3	Cam Akers (Fr.)
P	21	Logan Tyler (So.)	PR	3	Derwin James (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Deondre Francois, 400-235-3,350-7, 20 TDs
Rushing: Jacques Patrick, 61 att., 350 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Nyqwan Murray, 27 rec., 441 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Matthew Thomas, 77
Sacks: Brian Burns, 9.5
Interceptions: Tarvarus McFadden, 8

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jimbo Fisher
Record at School: 78-17 (7 years)
Career Record: 78-17 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Lawrence Dawsey, Randy Sanders **Defensive Coordinator:** Charles Kelly
Tallahassee, FL • Doak Campbell Stadium (79,560)

John Sommers II

LOUISVILLE CARDINALS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **18** • ACC ATLANTIC PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-3, 5-3 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	vs. Purdue #
Sept.	9	at North Carolina
Sept.	16	Clemson
Sept.	23	Kent State
Sept.	30	Murray State
Oct.	5	at NC State
Oct.	14	Boston College
Oct.	21	at Florida State
Oct.	28	at Wake Forest
Nov.	11	Virginia
Nov.	18	Syracuse
Nov.	25	at Kentucky

#Indianapolis, IN

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 7-1 ACC

Sept.	1	Charlotte	W	70-14
Sept.	9	at Syracuse	W	62-28
Sept.	17	Florida State	W	63-20
Sept.	24	at Marshall	W	59-28
Oct.	1	at Clemson	L	36-42
Oct.	14	Duke	W	24-14
Oct.	22	NC State	W	54-13
Oct.	29	at Virginia	W	32-25
Nov.	5	at Boston College	W	52-7
Nov.	12	Wake Forest	W	44-12
Nov.	17	at Houston	L	10-36
Nov.	26	Kentucky	L	38-41
Dec.	31	vs. LSU #	L	9-29

#Citrus Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. C.J. Avery, S, Grenada, MS
2. Colin Wilson, RB, Green Cove Springs, FL
3. Russ Craig Yeast, CB, Greenwood, IN
4. Caleb Chandler, OG, Jefferson, GA
5. Mekhi Becton, OL, Highland Springs, VA
6. Justin Marshall, WR, Conyers, GA
7. Ronald Rudd, OL, Rialto, CA*
8. Malik Cunningham, QB, Montgomery, AL
9. Joshua Johnson, WR, Atlanta, GA
10. Corey Reed, WR, Fulton, GA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	42.5 ppg	1	6
Rushing	242.2 ypg	2	13
Passing	290.5 ypg	4	23
Total	532.7 ypg	1	3
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	23.8 ppg	6	31
Rushing	115.2 ypg	3	12
Passing	207.1 ypg	5	37
Total	322.2 ypg	3	14
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.54	13	107

STAT CORNER

2.5

Louisville averaged 7.2 yards per play (fourth in the nation) and allowed 4.7 (eighth). The plus-2.5-yard margin was the best in the nation.

OFFENSE Alabama, Ohio State and Clemson don't start with the edge that Bobby Petrino has — the nation's most prolific quarterback, Lamar Jackson, the 2016 Heisman Trophy winner. As dazzling as Jackson was last season, running for 21 touchdowns, passing for 30 more and delivering more than 5,100 yards in total offense, Petrino needs him to be more efficient this season, cranking up his 56.2 completion percentage and eliminating moments like his three-interception game against Kentucky. The UK loss was one of three straight that punctuated the Cards' season as they tumbled from playoff contention to No. 21 in the final AP poll.

Jackson needs help, especially from his line, which allowed 47 sacks, more than any ACC team. Petrino was so concerned that he hired former Florida assistant Mike Summers to fix the line.

Jeremy Smith excelled in the red zone last season, making him the favorite to become the featured back, but freshman Colin Wilson arrives as the most acclaimed running back Petrino has recruited since Michael Bush.

Jackson's three top passing targets are gone, but the Cards have a solid trio of experienced juniors in Devante Peete, Jaylen Smith and Traveon Samuel. Seth Dawkins was the star of spring practice. Plus, Petrino is committed to scripting more plays for Reggie Bonnafon, who can play quarterback, halfback or receiver. Charles Standberry and Micky Crum are solid tight ends.

DEFENSE The talented recruits left by Charlie Strong have all departed, and Petrino has also replaced feisty coordinator Todd Grantham with Peter Sirmon, a former NFL linebacker who ran the Mississippi State defense for one season. Sirmon will be assisted by secondary coach Lorenzo Ward, who worked with Petrino at Arkansas.

Drew Bailey will anchor a defensive line that has suffered significant losses to the NFL the last three seasons. Although James Hearns is listed as a linebacker, he typically parks his 6'3", 249-pound body at end and rushes the passer, making 10 of his 42 tackles behind the line. Hearns and linebacker Henry Famurewa missed the Cards' bowl game after suffering gunshot wounds at an off-campus party.

Linebacker Stacy Thomas overcame injuries to become the Cardinals' second-leading tackler, solid against the run and pass. Isaac Stewart and Jonathan Greenard did good things in limited playing time.

The secondary should be a strength with four returning starters, including cornerback Jaire Alexander, who led the Cards with five interceptions while generally covering the best receiver. But even the veterans must play better, because Louisville allowed 29 touchdown passes last season, the most in the ACC.

SPECIALISTS Mason King will be pushed by Austin Johnson to hold his punting spot. With Jackson delivering all those TDs, Blanton Creque attempted only 19 field goals, making 16. Alexander is a sure-handed threat on punt returns, while Malik Williams and Dawkins should split kickoff returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS After climbing as high as third nationally in mid-September and ranking fifth in the College Football Playoff poll after Week 12, the Cardinals wobbled down the stretch. Too many sacks. Too many fumbles. Too many missed tackles and blown assignments. The defensive issues have been assigned to Sirmon, who has only one season of experience as a coordinator. Summers built solid offensive lines for Petrino at Arkansas and during his first run at Louisville. The head coach has drilled his team over the 22 fumbles lost. Odds are the Cards are looking at another third-place Atlantic Division finish behind Florida State and Clemson.



LAMAR JACKSON

"People will play them differently this year, and it's going to put a lot of stress on their offensive line to protect (Lamar Jackson) better."
– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	7	**Reggie Bonnafon (Sr.)**	86	Devante Peete (Jr.)
WR	5	Seth Dawkins (So.)	87	Dez Fitzpatrick (Fr.)
WR	9	Jaylen Smith (Jr.)	1	Traveon Samuel (Jr.)
LT	74	**Geron Christian (Jr.)**	60	Tyler Haycraft (So.)
LG	72	**Lukayus McNeil (Jr.)**	75	Robbie Bell (Fr.)
C	63	Nathan Scheler (So.)	66	Cole Bentley (Fr.)
RG	77	Linwood Foy (Jr.)	79	Kenny Thomas (Jr.)
RT	70	Toriano Roundtree (Jr.)	65	Luke Schultheiss (So.)
TE	83	Micky Crum (Jr.)	80	Charles Standberry (Sr.)
QB	8	**Lamar Jackson (Jr.)**	4	Jawon Pass (Fr.)
RB	34	Jeremy Smith (Sr.)	12	Trey Smith (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	14	**Drew Bailey (Sr.)**	44	Chris Williams (Sr.)
DT	95	Kyle Shortridge (Sr.)	59	Caleb Tillman (Fr.)
DE	90	De'Asian Richardson (Sr.)	94	G.G. Robinson (So.)
OLB	99	**James Hearns (Sr.)**	93	Gary McCrae (Jr.)
ILB	32	**Stacy Thomas (Sr.)**	31	Malik Staples (So.)
ILB	42	Isaac Stewart (Jr.)	53	Amonte Caban (So).
OLB	91	Trevon Young (Sr.)	58	Jonathan Greenard (So.)
CB	10	**Jaire Alexander (Jr.)**	20	Ronald Walker (Sr.)
CB	15	**Trumaine Washington (Sr.)**	3	Cornelius Sturghill (So.)
SS	24	**Zykiesis Cannon (Sr.)**	30	Khane Pass (So.)
FS	22	**Chucky Williams (Sr.)**	11	Dee Smith (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	32	Blanton Creque (So.)	KR	5	Seth Dawkins (So.)
P	29	Mason King. (So.)	PR	10	Jaire Alexander (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Lamar Jackson, 409-230-3,543-9, 30 TDs
Rushing: Lamar Jackson, 260 att., 1,571 yds., 21 TDs
Receiving: Jaylen Smith, 27 rec., 599 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Stacy Thomas, 85
Sacks: James Hearns, 8.0
Interceptions: Jaire Alexander, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bobby Petrino
Record at School: 67-22 (7 years)
Career Record: 109-43 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Lonnie Galloway, Mike Summers **Defensive Coordinator:** Peter Sirmon
Louisville, KY • Papa John's Cardinal Stadium (55,000)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

NC STATE WOLFPACK

NATIONAL FORECAST: **27** • ACC ATLANTIC PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 4-4 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. South Carolina #	
Sept. 9	Marshall	
Sept. 16	Furman	
Sept. 23	at Florida State	
Sept. 30	Syracuse	
Oct. 5	Louisville	
Oct. 14	at Pittsburgh	
Oct. 28	at Notre Dame	
Nov. 4	Clemson	
Nov. 11	at Boston College	
Nov. 18	at Wake Forest	
Nov. 25	North Carolina	

#Charlotte, NC

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 3-5 ACC

Sept. 1	William & Mary		W	48-14
Sept. 10	at East Carolina		L	30-33
Sept. 17	Old Dominion		W	49-22
Oct. 1	Wake Forest		W	33-16
Oct. 8	Notre Dame		W	10-3
Oct. 15	at Clemson	(ot)	L	17-24
Oct. 22	at Louisville		L	13-54
Oct. 29	Boston College		L	14-21
Nov. 5	Florida State		L	20-24
Nov. 12	at Syracuse		W	35-20
Nov. 19	Miami		L	13-27
Nov. 25	at North Carolina		W	28-21
Dec. 26	vs. Vanderbilt #		W	41-17

#Independence Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Grant Gibson, DT, Charlotte, NC
2. Emeka Emezie, WR, Waxhaw, NC
3. Joshua Fedd-Jackson, OT, Montvale, NJ
4. Antoine Thompson, WR, Plant City, FL
5. Chris Ingram, CB, Mooresville, NC
6. Louis Acceus, LB, Spring Valley, NY
7. Matt McKay, QB, Raleigh, NC
8. Isaiah Moore, LB, Chester, VA
9. Raven Saunders, LB, Riviera Beach, FL
10. Damien Darden, TE, Pikeville, NC

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.0 ppg	9	75
Rushing	156.2 ypg	7	86
Passing	260.2 ypg	8	38
Total	416.4 ypg	9	63
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.8 ppg	4	27
Rushing	108.6 ypg	2	8
Passing	244.2 ypg	11	82
Total	352.8 ypg	7	24
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.15	6	49

STAT CORNER

4.4

The NC State defense allowed 4.4 yards per play on first down (second in FBS), thanks primarily to an average of 2.7 yards per rush.

OFFENSE NC State is already a step ahead of where it was last year because it has its starting quarterback in place. Ryan Finley, a graduate transfer from Boise State, arrived in Raleigh last summer and won the job from Jalan McClendon. Finley was steady but not spectacular in his first season in the ACC. He completed 60.4 percent of his passes for 3,059 yards with 18 touchdowns and eight interceptions. He'll need to take more chances downfield this season.

A couple of versatile run/catch options will be the top threats in second-year coordinator Eli Drinkwitz's offense. Senior Jaylen Samuels, who has been listed as a fullback and tight end but is for all intents and purposes a slot receiver, has 31 touchdowns in 39 career games. He has led the Wolfpack in receiving the past two years. Junior Nyheim Hines has played receiver the past two years but will be in the backfield more this season as the Wolfpack attempt to replace 1,000-yard rusher Matt Dayes.

The offensive line is another spot at which NC State is well ahead of where it was last year. Four starters return, including senior right guard Tony Adams — a three-year starter and second-team All-ACC selection.

DEFENSE NC State features one of the top defensive lines in the country, with four senior starters returning. Bradley Chubb, an All-ACC pick, racked up 21.5 tackles for a loss, including 10.5 sacks. He was able to dominate one-on-one blocks on the outside because of the strength of the interior of the line. The Pack ranked second in the ACC against the run a year ago, allowing only 108.6 yards per game and 3.3 yards per attempt.

The Pack need to get more out of linebackers Jerod Fernandez (88 tackles) and Airius Moore (86). The two seniors have essentially started together for the past three years. They had some growing pains earlier in their careers, and even early last season, but both finished the 2016 season strong.

The secondary, which must identify three new starters, is the biggest area of concern for head coach Dave Doeren. There is some experience to work with; senior Mike Stevens returns at one cornerback spot, and senior strong safety Shawn Boone will be counted on to be a leader. Inexperienced corner Nick McCloud and nickel Freddie Phillips will have to grow up quickly.

SPECIALISTS NC State has struggled the past two years in the kicking game. Doeren is hopeful that Carson Wise, a graduate transfer from Carson-Newman, can help solve that problem. The Wolfpack were just 9-of-17 on field goal attempts last season and had a combined five missed field goals in close losses to East Carolina and Clemson. Wise, who began his career at Virginia Tech, wasn't exactly automatic at Carson-Newman last year (8-of-13 on field goals). Fortunately for Doeren, he does have a standout punter, junior A.J. Cole, and an outstanding kick returner in Hines.

FINAL ANALYSIS Doeren hopes that experience translates into a breakthrough after a season of "almosts" in 2016. NC State almost beat national champion Clemson. NC State almost beat perennial power Florida State. Including those two heartbreakers, four of the Wolfpack's six losses were by seven points or fewer.

The Wolfpack return 22 seniors, half of whom start, from a team that finished the 2016 season with a flourish. There is a sense among Wolfpack fans that this could be Doeren's best team, but it also could be his last chance, if things don't go right.

With so many of the same parts back from last year, led by Chubb and Samuels, the Wolfpack have a chance break out of the seven- and eight-win rut and be a legitimate factor in the ACC.



JAYLEN SAMUELS

"There might not be a better front four in the league aside from Clemson. They've got six guys who could start just about anywhere in the ACC."
– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	12	**Stephen Louis (Jr.)**	85	JuMichael Ramos (Sr.)
WR	3	Kelvin Harmon (So.)	19	C.J. Riley (Fr.)
WR	1	**Jaylen Samuels (Sr.)**	11	Jakobi Meyers (So.)
LT	53	**Tyler Jones (Jr.)**	74	Emanuel McGirt (So.)
LG	70	Terronne Prescod (Jr.)	76	Harrison Gee (Fr.)
C	65	**Garrett Bradbury (Jr.)**	71	Joe Sculthorpe (Fr.)
RG	50	**Tony Adams (Sr.)**	64	Peter Daniel (Sr.)
RT	54	**Will Richardson (Jr.)**	67	Justin Witt (Fr.)
TE	48	**Cole Cook (Sr.)**	89	Thomas Ruocchio (So.)
QB	15	**Ryan Finley (Jr.)**	2	Jalan McClendon (Jr.)
RB	7	Nyheim Hines (Jr.)	4	Reggie Gallaspy (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	9	**Bradley Chubb (Sr.)**	39	James Smith-Williams (So.)
DT	27	**Justin Jones (Sr.)**	91	Eurndraus Bryant (Jr.)
DT	98	**B.J. Hill (Sr.)**	90	Shug Frazier (Fr.)
DE	35	**Kentavius Street (Sr.)**	45	Darian Roseboro (Jr.)
LB	4	**Jerod Fernandez (Sr.)**	32	Riley Nicholson (Jr.)
LB	58	**Airius Moore (Sr.)**	3	Germaine Pratt (Jr.)
CB	2	**Mike Stevens (Sr.)**	15	Johnathan Alston (Sr.)
CB	21	Nick McCloud (So.)	12	Nicholas Lacy (Sr.)
NB	10	Freddie Phillips (Jr.)	20	Trae Meadows (So.)
FS	14	Dexter Wright (Jr.)	34	Tim Kidd-Glass (So.)
SS	24	**Shawn Boone (Sr.)**	31	Jarius Morehead (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	35	Carson Wise (Jr.)	KR	7	Nyheim Hines (Jr.)
P	90	A.J. Cole (Jr.)	PR	7	Nyheim Hines (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ryan Finley, 402-243-3,059-8, 18 TDs
Rushing: Reggie Gallaspy II, 49 att., 234 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Jaylen Samuels, 55 rec., 565 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Jerod Fernandez, 88
Sacks: Bradley Chubb, 10.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dave Doeren
Record at School: 25-26 (4 years)
Career Record: 48-30 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Eliah Drinkwitz
Defensive Coordinator: Dave Huxtable
Raleigh, NC • Carter-Finley Stadium (57,583)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

SYRACUSE ORANGE

NATIONAL FORECAST: **63** • ACC ATLANTIC PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 2-6 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Central Connecticut State
Sept.	9	Middle Tennessee
Sept.	16	Central Michigan
Sept.	23	at LSU
Sept.	30	at NC State
Oct.	7	Pittsburgh
Oct.	13	Clemson
Oct.	21	at Miami
Nov.	4	at Florida State
Nov.	11	Wake Forest
Nov.	18	at Louisville
Nov.	25	Boston College

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 ACC

Sept.	2	Colgate	W	33-7
Sept.	9	Louisville	L	28-62
Sept.	17	South Florida	L	20-45
Sept.	24	at Connecticut	W	31-24
Oct.	1	vs. Notre Dame #	L	33-50
Oct.	8	at Wake Forest	L	9-28
Oct.	15	Virginia Tech	W	31-17
Oct.	22	Boston College	W	28-20
Nov.	5	at Clemson	L	0-54
Nov.	12	NC State	L	20-35
Nov.	19	Florida State	L	14-45
Nov.	26	at Pittsburgh	L	61-76

#East Rutherford

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tommy DeVito, QB, Cedar Grove, NJ
2. Ravian Pierce, TE, Plantation, FL*
3. Kingsley Jonathan, DL, Baltimore, MD
4. Nadarius Fagan, LB, Goulds, FL
5. Zach Morton, DL, Detroit, MI
6. Mykelti Williams, DB, Indianapolis, IN*
7. Allen Stritzinger, RB, Clinton Township, MI
8. Eric Coley, DB, Manlius, NY
9. Nykeim Johnson, WR, Washington, DC
10. Sharod Johnson, WR, Miami, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.7 ppg	10	90
Rushing	119.6 ypg	13	115
Passing	321.3 ypg	2	11
Total	440.8 ypg	6	42
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	38.6 ppg	14	120
Rushing	225.0 ypg	13	108
Passing	276.1 ypg	13	118
Total	501.1 ypg	14	122
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	10	75

STAT CORNER

7.4

The Syracuse defense allowed 7.4 yards per play in ACC games. Only two teams nationally were worse in league play – Rice (7.7 in C-USA) and Arkansas (7.9 in SEC).

OFFENSE Eric Dungey returns for his junior year as one of the top signal callers in the ACC. He has the arm strength and accuracy to make every throw in head coach Dino Babers' hurry-up spread offense, as well as the agility to win one-on-one situations against edge defenders. Once again, his ability to stay healthy projects to be a key variable in the Orange's campaign.

Babers may finally have a power back to fit his system in freshman Markenzy Pierre, who rushed for more than 2,500 yards and 31 touchdowns as a high school senior and is expected to work his way in behind junior Dontae Strickland. SU also returns sophomore Moe Neal, who averaged a team-high 5.2 yards per carry last season, but he practiced in the slot during spring ball.

At receiver, senior Steve Ishmael is expected to be the top man on the outside. However, senior inside receiver Erv Philips could be the team's most dynamic pass-catching threat. His stop-start speed is remarkable. Junior Jamal Custis and sophomore Devin Butler have the size and speed to stretch the field. Junior college tight end Ravian Pierce could also become an impact player.

While Dungey's health is the key for SU's offense, position-wise, the offensive line is the biggest question mark. Injuries forced the Orange to use five first-year starters for the majority of last season.

DEFENSE Senior middle linebacker Zaire Franklin is the leader of Syracuse's defense and entire team. He's a two-time captain who brings toughness and leadership as well as consistency defending the run and a developing coverage skill set. He's flanked on the weak side by senior Parris Bennett, another sure tackler who combined with Franklin last season to become the first 100-tackle pair at SU in more than a decade.

Junior defensive tackle Chris Slayton is back as the lone proven entity in the front four. With junior Steven Clark's football future in doubt due to a blood clotting issue discovered this offseason, sophomore McKinley Williams is emerging as a potential starter — he's gained more than 40 pounds since arriving last summer. Defensive ends Kendall Coleman and Josh Black will need to become more consistent. Junior college transfer Brandon Berry could also work his way into the mix.

In the secondary, free safety Antwan Cordy is fully recovered from the broken forearm that ended his 2016 season in Week 2. He may be joined by three new faces; SU has signed graduate transfer cornerbacks Devin M. Butler (Notre Dame) and Jordan Martin (Toledo), as well as junior college safety Mykelti Williams. The trio brings size to fit the Tampa-2 scheme and much-needed experience.

SPECIALISTS Syracuse faces a tall task in replacing return man Brisly Estime, who led the nation in punt return average last season. Senior kicker Cole Murphy will look to rebound from a 10-for-18 campaign last season. Sophomore punter Sterling Hofrichter became adept at executing the rugby-style punt last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Babers hopes to replicate the second-season growth he experienced with Eastern Illinois (five more wins) and Bowling Green (two) at Syracuse in 2017. But after achieving a 4–8 mark in Year 1, he faces one of the toughest schedules in the nation. In addition to games with Atlantic Division foes Florida State, Clemson and Louisville, SU travels to Miami and LSU. The plan is for Babers' offense to reach peak performance around Weeks 4-6. The team will need to maintain that production while making significant strides on defense if it wants to make its first bowl game since 2013.



ERIC DUNGEY

"(Dino) Babers is used to having a track team at that position when he was at Baylor, and I don't see that kind of speed there."
– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	8	**Steve Ishmael (Sr.)**		R.Thompson-Bishop (Fr.)
WR	17	Jamal Custis (Jr.)	5	Devin Butler (So.)
WR	3	**Ervin Philips (Sr.)**		Nykeim Johnson (Fr.)
WR	21	Moe Neal (So.)	10	Sean Riley (So.)
LT	60	**Cody Conway (Jr.)**	77	Mike Clark (Fr.)
LG	59	**Aaron Roberts (Jr.)**	69	Patrick Davis (Fr.)
C	64	**Colin Byrne (So.)**	75	Sam Heckel (Fr.)
RG	63	**Evan Adams (So.)**	68	Airon Servais (Fr.)
RT	65	**Jamar McGloster (Sr.)**	77	Mike Clark (Fr.)
QB	2	**Eric Dungey (Jr.)**	16	Zack Mahoney (Sr.)
RB	4	**Dontae Strickland (Jr.)**		Markenzy Pierre (Fr.)

DEFENSE (10)

DE	55	**Kendall Coleman (So.)**		Brandon Berry (So.)
DT	94	**Steven Clark (Jr.)**	52	Kayton Samuels (Jr.)
DT	95	**Chris Slayton (Jr.)**	98	McKinley Williams (So.)
DE	85	**Josh Black (So.)**		Josh Allen (Jr.)
WLB	30	**Parris Bennett (Sr.)**	41	Ryan Guthrie (Jr.)
MLB	4	**Zaire Franklin (Sr.)**	12	Andrew Armstrong (So)
SLB	23	**Jonathan Thomas (Sr.)**	24	Shyheim Cullen (So.)
CB	10	Devin M. Butler (Sr.)		Jordan Martin (Sr.)
CB	9	Juwan Dowels (Jr.)	28	**Christopher Fredrick (So.)**
FS	8	Antwan Cordy (Jr.)	6	**Rodney Williams (Jr.)**
SS		Mykelti Williams (So.)	19	**Daivon Ellison (Jr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	48	Cole Murphy (Sr.)	KR	10	Sean Riley (So.)
P	35	Sterling Hofrichter (So.)	PR	10	Sean Riley (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Eric Dungey, 355-230-2,679-7, 15 TDs
Rushing: Dontae Strickland, 162 att., 566 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Ervin Philips, 90 rec., 822 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Parris Bennett; 110
Sacks: Chris Slayton, 4.0
Interceptions: Rodney Williams, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dino Babers
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 41-24 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Sean Lewis, Mike Lynch
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Ward
Syracuse, NY • Carrier Dome (49,262)

Bruce Schwartzman

WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **52** • ACC ATLANTIC PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 3-5 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	Presbyterian	
Sept. 9	at Boston College	
Sept. 16	Utah State	
Sept. 23	at Appalachian State	
Sept. 30	Florida State	
Oct. 7	at Clemson	
Oct. 21	at Georgia Tech	
Oct. 28	Louisville	
Nov. 4	at Notre Dame	
Nov. 11	at Syracuse	
Nov. 18	NC State	
Nov. 25	Duke	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 3-5 ACC

Sept. 1	Tulane	W	7-3
Sept. 10	at Duke	W	24-14
Sept. 17	Delaware	W	38-21
Sept. 24	at Indiana	W	33-28
Oct. 1	at NC State	L	16-33
Oct. 8	Syracuse	W	28-9
Oct. 15	at Florida State	L	6-17
Oct. 29	Army	L	13-21
Nov. 5	Virginia	W	27-20
Nov. 12	at Louisville	L	12-44
Nov. 19	Clemson	L	13-35
Nov. 26	Boston College	L	14-17
Dec. 27	vs. Temple #	W	34-26

#Military Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Mike Allen, DE, Sugar Hill, GA
2. Jeff Burley, LB, Jackson, GA
3. Christian Beal, RB, Kernersville, NC
4. Chase Monroe, LB, Huntersville, NC
5. Tyriq Hardimon, DB, Marietta, GA
6. D.J. Taylor, LB, Belvidere, TN
7. Troy Simon, CB, Alpharetta, GA
8. Waydale Jones, WR, Beeville, TX
9. Sage Surratt, WR, Lincolnton, NC
10. Tayvone Bowers, QB, Harrisburg, PA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.4 ppg	13	118
Rushing	145.8 ypg	12	101
Passing	165.7 ypg	12	113
Total	311.5 ypg	13	124
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.2 ppg	3	23
Rushing	142.4 ypg	9	33
Passing	228.2 ypg	8	66
Total	370.5 ypg	8	40
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+8	+0.62	2	18

STAT CORNER

5.2

The national average for yards per play in FBS was 5.8 in 2016. Wake Forest hasn't averaged more than 5.2 per play since 2009.

OFFENSE Dave Clawson won a bowl game with the nation's No. 118 scoring offense. He's hoping that experience will improve that ranking. "This is the first time where the guys returning on the offensive two-deep will be in their third, fourth or fifth year," he says.

Everything starts — or stops — along the line. The Deacons have struggled to keep quarterbacks John Wolford and Kendall Hinton healthy, allowing at least 39 sacks in each of the last three seasons. While Wake Forest's average yards per carry in 2016 topped only 17 other programs, that's actually an improvement.

The line loses two long-time starters but returns three rising juniors — Justin Herron, Phil Haynes and Ryan Anderson — who already have 62 combined starts. "Those guys are now legitimate ACC offensive linemen," Clawson says. Depth is a concern: Only two of the projected non-starters have played.

Hinton missed most of last season with a knee injury. He can threaten defenses with his feet and a big arm, but accuracy is a concern. Wolford, a senior, has taken a beating, and he's offset his positives with 35 interceptions.

The running game improved with Matt Colburn (626 yards) and Cade Carney (589). Still, the backs were stopped at or behind the line 21 percent of the time, and only 8.6 percent of their carries gained 10 yards or more, third worst in the Power 5. Speedy Arkeem Byrd could change that.

The receiving corps failed to produce explosive plays. Slot Tabari Hines has 70 catches in two seasons, and every player who caught more than one pass returns. But the Deacons need another outside receiver to develop — and for Cortez Lewis and tight end Cam Serigne to get over nagging injuries and back to their 40-plus-catch form.

DEFENSE Wake Forest went from one of the worst in the country at creating turnovers to one of the best (No. 10), good enough to get coordinator Mike Elko hired by Notre Dame. New coordinator Jay Sawvel (Minnesota) will be without four of last year's top six tacklers.

End Duke Ejiofor (fourth in the ACC with 10.5 sacks) leads the program's best unit. The line goes at least six deep, and its excellence will have to cover for some question marks behind it.

The Deacons produced NFL-level linebackers in consecutive seasons (Brandon Chubb, Marquel Lee), but whether Jaboree Williams is next in line remains a question. Former walk-on Grant Dawson returns in the middle, as does Demetrius Kemp at rover. But the unit is so thin that two freshmen, Jeff Burley and Chase Monroe, could play.

Safety Jessie Bates made second-team All-ACC as a redshirt freshman, intercepting five passes to go with 100 tackles. The biggest issue will be finding two reliable cornerbacks — it looks as though sophomore Amari Henderson and graduate transfer Cedric Jiles will start.

SPECIALISTS Wake Forest returns All-ACC kicker Mike Weaver, automatic from inside 40 yards, and punter Dom Maggio, who impressed as a freshman. The return units remained at the bottom of the ACC, where they've been for most of the last decade, resulting in Clawson changing the special teams coach.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Deacons had only seven seniors play more than 100 plays last year, and every player who scored is back. Still, this team is young, with only nine scholarship seniors. Clawson faces a much more difficult schedule, has four new assistants and questions about depth everywhere. Wake Forest has little margin for error, and injuries could wreak havoc. The Deacons are 6–24 in November over eight seasons, and they could need two late wins to go bowling. Clawson could field a better team but end up worse off in the standings.



JESSIE BATES

"It's probably the toughest job in the league, but Dave Clawson has done a good job trying to play sound football and limit mistakes."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	15	Cortez Lewis (Jr.)	7	Scotty Washington (So.)	
WR	17	**Alex Bachman (Jr.)**	9	Chuck Wade (Jr.)	
SLT	1	**Tabari Hines (Jr.)**	89	Greg Dortch (Fr.)	
LT	75	**Justin Herron (Jr.)**	70	Ryan Anderson (Jr.)	
LG	68	Patrick Osterhage (Jr.)	71	Nathan Gilliam (So.)	
C	70	**Ryan Anderson (Jr.)**	55	A'Lique Terry (Sr.)	
RG	74	**Phil Haynes (Jr.)**	63	Je'Vionte' Nash (Fr.)	
RT	73	Jake Benzinger (So.)	70	Ryan Anderson (Jr.)	
TE	85	**Cam Serigne (Sr.)**	41	Devin Pike (Sr.)	
QB	2	Kendall Hinton (Jr.)	10	**John Wolford (Sr.)**	
RB	36	**Cade Carney (So.)**	22	Matt Colburn (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	14	**Wendell Dunn (Sr.)**	51	Chris Calhoun (Jr.)	
DT	48	Willie Yarbary (Jr.)	54	Elontae Bateman (So.)	
NT	93	Zeek Rodney (Jr.)	90	Sulaiman Kamara (Fr.)	
DE	53	**Duke Ejiofor (Sr.)**	45	Paris Black (So.)	
OLB	34	Demetrius Kemp (Jr.)	30	Ja'Cquez Williams (Fr.)	
MLB	50	Grant Dawson (Sr.)	23	Justin Strnad (So.)	
OLB	6	**Jaboree Williams (Sr.)**	35	Nate Mays (So.)	
CB	10	**Amari Henderson (So.)**	11	Dionte Austin (Jr.)	
CB		Cedric Jiles (Sr.)	21	Essang Bassey (So.)	
SS	2	Cameron Glenn (Jr.)	17	Traveon Redd (So.)	
FS	3	**Jessie Bates (So.)**	12	Luke Masterson (Fr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	7	Mike Weaver (Sr.)	KR	89	Greg Dortch (Fr.)
P	48	Dom Maggio (So.)	PR	3	Jessie Bates (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: John Wolford, 299-166-1,774-10, 9 TDs
Rushing: Matt Colburn, 151 att., 626 yds., 2 TD
Receiving: Tabari Hines, 38 rec., 447 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Jessie Bates, 100
Sacks: Duke Ejiofor, 10.5
Interceptions: Jessie Bates, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dave Clawson
Record at School: 13-24 (3 years)
Career Record: 103-103 (17 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Warren Ruggiero
Defensive Coordinator: Jay Sawvel
Winston-Salem, NC • BB&T Field (31,500)

AP

DUKE BLUE DEVILS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **62** • ACC COASTAL PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 2-6 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	NC Central
Sept.	9	Northwestern
Sept.	16	Baylor
Sept.	23	at North Carolina
Sept.	29	Miami
Oct.	7	at Virginia
Oct.	14	Florida State
Oct.	21	Pittsburgh
Oct.	28	at Virginia Tech
Nov.	11	at Army
Nov.	18	Georgia Tech
Nov.	25	at Wake Forest

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 1-7 ACC

Sept.	3	NC Central	W	49-6
Sept.	10	Wake Forest	L	14-24
Sept.	17	at Northwestern	L	13-24
Sept.	24	at Notre Dame	W	38-35
Oct.	1	Virginia	L	20-34
Oct.	8	Army	W	13-6
Oct.	14	at Louisville	L	14-24
Oct.	29	at Georgia Tech	L	35-38
Nov.	5	Virginia Tech	L	21-24
Nov.	10	North Carolina	W	28-27
Nov.	19	at Pittsburgh	L	14-56
Nov.	26	at Miami	L	21-40

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Drew Jordan, DL, Suwanee, GA
2. Jake Marwede, TE, Wilmette, IL
3. Jacob Rimmer, OL, Milan, TN
4. Patrick Leitten, OL, Brentwood, TN
5. Damani Neal, DB, Sterling, VA
6. Will Taylor, OL, Snellville, GA
7. Michael Carter II, DB, Douglasville, GA
8. Chris Katrenick, QB, Algonquin, IL
9. Joshua Blackwell, DB, Buford, GA
10. Deon Jackson, RB, Atlanta, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.3 ppg	11	110
Rushing	153.6 ypg	8	89
Passing	239.8 ypg	9	60
Total	393.3 ypg	10	76
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.2 ppg	11	66
Rushing	174.9 ypg	11	66
Passing	239.8 ypg	10	78
Total	414.7 ypg	11	67
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.33	12	93

STAT CORNER

4.6

Duke averaged just 4.6 yards per play on first down, third lowest in FBS. That meant a lot of third-and-longs for a freshman quarterback.

OFFENSE If nothing else, the 2016 season delivered quarterback guru David Cutcliffe his next project. Stepping in as a redshirt freshman, Daniel Jones proved to be a bright spot in a rough season, throwing for 2,836 yards and 16 touchdowns while closing the year with a string of 173 passes without an interception. And thanks to major roster turnover elsewhere, the 6'5", 210-pounder enters this season as the most experienced starting signal caller in the ACC's Coastal Division.

Jones will have experienced targets to throw to in junior receivers T.J. Rahming, Johnathan Lloyd and Chris Taylor. Rahming's 70 catches last season were 36 more than the next-closest Blue Devil. After splitting time with then-senior Jela Duncan last season, running back Shaun Wilson will become the featured back behind an offensive line that has three returning starters but little experienced depth. Ohio State graduate transfer Evan Lisle could end up playing a prominent role. He did not start a game during his career as a Buckeye.

DEFENSE The good news for the Devils is that the top two tacklers from last season — linebackers Ben Humphreys and Joe Giles-Harris — both return. Combining for 213 tackles and 20.5 tackles for a loss, they both possess size, speed and a nose for the ball. They should also have some help, as there are some seasoned linebackers able to rotate in when needed. However, the bad news facing Duke's defense is that there are question marks nearly everywhere else.

Senior Mike Ramsay will reprise his role at defensive tackle, but he will need to guide the three new defensive line starters who will surround him. In the secondary, the Blue Devils will have to replace program mainstays Breon Borders and DeVon Edwards. Senior Bryon Fields and sophomore Mark Gilbert give the Blue Devils a pair of proven performers at cornerback. But senior Alonzo Saxton will be the lone returning starter at the Blue Devils' three safety spots. Jeremy McDuffie, a converted cornerback, will likely man one of the others.

SPECIALISTS When Edwards was ready to field a kick, opponents had every right to be worried — he took six kicks back for touchdowns during his Duke career. With him gone, the Duke return game faces a major challenge. Wilson will get a chance to handle the kickoff return duties, but the punt return role is wide open. While sophomore Austin Parker averaged 40.9 yards per punt last season, locking up the starting gig for this season, he'll likely also be called upon to try and solve the Blue Devils' kicking woes. Last season, freshman A.J. Reed connected on just 3-of-10 field-goal tries. Reed is back as a sophomore to try and win the job again, but Parker and others will compete for the job as well.

FINAL ANALYSIS For an example of how far Duke football has come, one needs look no further than last season. In the decade since he arrived in Durham, Cutcliffe turned what had been a football wasteland into a program that reached four straight bowl games, briefly cracked the top 25 and made great strides in recruiting, facilities and visibility. So when the 2016 squad stumbled through a season defined by injuries, bad breaks and head-scratching losses, oddly enough, it felt out of character.

This season, the Blue Devils should have a chance to get back to a more familiar Cutcliffe-era script. Jones should give the offense a dynamic leader and, if the defense can find answers, the Blue Devils have every reason to believe they can make strides and compete for a bowl bid in a Coastal Division that lacks a clear hierarchy.



DANIEL JONES

"Nobody at receiver really scared you, but I liked their tailbacks. No. 29 (Shaun Wilson) plays bigger than he is."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	5	**Johnathan Lloyd (Jr.)**	7	Keyston Fuller (So.)
WR	82	Chris Taylor (Jr.)	11	Scott Bracey (Fr.)
WR	3	**T.J. Rahming (Jr.)**	8	Aaron Young (So.)
LT	76	**Gabe Brandner (Sr.)**	77	Robert Kraeling (Fr.)
LG	65	Julian Santos (So.)	78	Sterling Korona (Sr.)
C	50	**Austin Davis (Sr.)**	69	Zach Baker (So.)
RG	63	**Zach Harmon (Jr.)**	66	Jaylen Miller (Fr.)
RT	72	Evan Lisle (Sr.)	70	Christian Harris (Jr.)
TE	80	Daniel Helm (Jr.)	81	Davis Koppenhaver (Jr.)
QB	17	**Daniel Jones (So.)**	18	Quentin Harris (So.)
RB	29	**Shaun Wilson (Sr.)**	22	Brittain Brown (Fr.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	59	Tre Hornbuckle (So.)	94	Twazanga Mugala (So.)
DT	99	**Mike Ramsay (Sr.)**	95	Trevon McSwain (So.)
DT	92	Edgar Cerenord (Jr.)	97	Quaven Ferguson (Jr.)
DE	90	Terrell Lucas (So.)	98	Chidi Okonya (So.)
ILB	34	**Ben Humphreys (Jr.)**	49	Koby Quansah (So.)
OLB	44	**Joe Giles-Harris (So.)**	43	Tinashe Bere (Jr.)
CB	14	**Bryon Fields Jr. (Sr.)**	35	Antone Williams (Fr.)
CB	28	Mark Gilbert (So.)	39	Zach Muñiz (Sr.)
S	9	Jeremy McDuffie (Jr.)	30	Brandon Feamster (So.)
S	21	**Alonzo Saxton II (Sr.)**	16	Dylan Singleton (So.)
S	13	Jordan Hayes (So.)	2	Javon Jackson (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	42	Austin Parker (So.)	KR	29	Shaun Wilson (Sr.)
P	42	Austin Parker (So.)	PR	28	Mark Gilbert (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Daniel Jones, 430-270-2,836-9, 16 TDs
Rushing: Shaun Wilson, 151 att., 623 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: T.J. Rahming, 70 rec., 742 yds., 1 TDs
Tackles: Joe Giles-Harris, 107
Sacks: Ben Humphreys, 4.5
Interceptions: Bryon Fields, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: David Cutcliffe
Record at School: 52-61 (9 years)
Career Record: 96-90 (15 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Zac Roper
Defensive Coordinators: Ben Albert, Jim Knowles
Durham, NC • Wallace Wade Stadium (40,004)

Margaret Bowles

GEORGIA TECH YELLOW JACKETS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **36** • ACC COASTAL PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 4-4 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	4	Tennessee #
Sept.	9	Jacksonville State
Sept.	16	at UCF
Sept.	23	Pittsburgh
Sept.	30	North Carolina
Oct.	12	at Miami
Oct.	21	Wake Forest
Oct.	28	at Clemson
Nov.	4	at Virginia
Nov.	11	Virginia Tech
Nov.	18	at Duke
Nov.	25	Georgia

#Mercedes-Benz Stadium

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 4-4 ACC

Sept.	3	vs. Boston College #	W	17-14
Sept.	10	Mercer	W	35-10
Sept.	17	Vanderbilt	W	38-7
Sept.	22	Clemson	L	7-26
Oct.	1	Miami	L	21-35
Oct.	8	at Pittsburgh	L	34-37
Oct.	15	Georgia Southern	W	35-24
Oct.	29	Duke	W	38-35
Nov.	5	at North Carolina	L	20-48
Nov.	12	at Virginia Tech	W	30-20
Nov.	19	Virginia	W	31-17
Nov.	26	at Georgia	W	28-27
Dec.	31	vs. Kentucky %	W	33-18

#Dublin, Ireland %TaxSlayer Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Bruce Jordan-Swilling, LB, New Orleans, LA
2. Jaquan Henderson, LB, Covington, GA
3. Tre Swilling, DB, New Orleans, LA
4. Kaleb Oliver, DB, Murfreesboro, TN
5. Gentry Bonds, DB, Murfreesboro, TN
6. Jaytlin Askew, DB, Atlanta, GA
7. Cortez Alston, DL, Atlanta, GA
8. Dameon Williams, DB, Norcross, GA
9. Tobias Oliver, WB, Warner Robins, GA
10. Mikey Minihan, OL, Honolulu, HI

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.2 ppg	8	70
Rushing	258.1 ypg	1	9
Passing	129.2 ypg	14	124
Total	387.2 ypg	11	85
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.5 ppg	7	39
Rushing	172.2 ypg	10	64
Passing	229.4 ypg	9	68
Total	401.6 ypg	9	59
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.31	4	38

STAT CORNER

11.9

The Yellow Jackets' havoc rate (combined tackles for a loss, forced fumbles, and passes defensed per play) was 11.9%, 123rd in FBS.

OFFENSE With the bulk of a promising young offensive line returning along with its most productive running backs and every contributor at receiver, Georgia Tech has a chance to be more potent offensively than last season, when it averaged 258.1 rushing yards, the second-lowest figure in the Paul Johnson/triple-option era.

But as always with Johnson's offense, the quarterback is the catalyst for everything, and Georgia Tech hasn't had this much uncertainty at that position since 2013. Junior Matthew Jordan, who often handled short-yardage situations last season, will begin fall camp in the strongest position. But Johnson also likes junior TaQuon Marshall, who offers more dynamic playmaking potential and started his career as an A-back because of his speed.

Whoever starts will be helped by experienced skill players and an offensive line that jelled in the second half of last season with three freshmen contributing.

B-back Dedrick Mills, a stout physical specimen at 5'10", 217 pounds who averaged 86 yards per game as a rookie, could grow into one of the league's best runners. Clinton Lynch (11.2 yards per carry) and J.J. Green are quick, change-of-direction types who can break big plays.

DEFENSE Georgia Tech is determined to reignite a pass rush that has fallen flat the past couple seasons, generating just 18 sacks in 2016. That would do wonders to help out an experienced secondary that is capable of making big plays but has had to survive too many aerial assaults in the quarterback-rich ACC. The Yellow Jackets have never been dominant on defense under Johnson, but their best teams typically create enough negative plays and turnovers to give the ball to their clock-dominating offense. Last season, for example, it was nickel back Lawrence Austin's two interceptions and fumble recovery against Virginia Tech that keyed a 30–20 upset. Austin and his twin brother Lance combined for six INTs last year, but they can't do it all.

"When you're trying to match scores, it's not good," Johnson says. "Especially when the possessions are limited, winning the turnover battle is probably the most important thing we can gauge ourselves on."

Georgia Tech needs senior defensive end KeShun Freeman to become a more explosive playmaker while getting starting-quality production from junior Anree Saint-Amour and senior Antonio Simmons, who have flashed pass-rushing ability. There's also some question at outside linebacker, where three-year starter P.J. Davis is gone.

SPECIALISTS With kicker Harrison Butker and punter Ryan Rodwell both graduating, Georgia Tech is putting a lot of faith in freshmen. Brenton King is an in-state placekicking prospect the Jackets identified at their summer camp, and Pressley Harvin III was one of the highest-rated punters in the 2017 class. If one or both struggle, the Jackets will have to turn to a walk-on.

FINAL ANALYSIS Something clicked midway through 2016. The Yellow Jackets finished strong, posting a 9–4 season including a win at Georgia that should give them momentum in a division in which the top programs are all losing multiple key players. With eight returning defensive starters and nine on offense, there are some proven, experienced ingredients. But replacing Justin Thomas, a highly productive three-year starter at quarterback, may not be that simple. And on defense, the front six has some intriguing young players but no clear-cut difference makers or vocal leaders. How Georgia Tech fills those personnel holes will likely determine whether it wins the Coastal for a fifth time in Johnson's decade on the flats or has to sweat reaching bowl eligibility.



DEDRICK MILLS

"When you play Georgia Tech, you have to be ready for a fistfight. They're just a nasty bunch. ... They really push the edge of the rules."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	2	**Ricky Jeune (Sr.)**	80	Jalen Camp (So.)
WR	83	**Brad Stewart (Jr.)**	84	Stephen Dolphus (Fr.)
LT	53	Jahaziel Lee (So.)	67	Jake Stickler (Jr.)
LG	75	**Parker Braun (So.)**	71	**Shamire Devine (Sr.)**
C	55	Kenny Cooper (So.)	59	Scott Morgan (So.)
RG	70	**Will Bryan (Jr.)**	60	Brad Morgan (So.)
RT	50	**Andrew Marshall (Sr.)**		Zach Quinney (Fr.)
QB	11	Matthew Jordan (Jr.)	16	TaQuon Marshall (Jr.)
AB	22	**Clinton Lynch (Jr.)**	46	Xavier Gantt (Fr.)
AB	28	**J.J. Green (Sr.)**	1	Qua Searcy (Jr.)
BB	26	**Dedrick Mills (So.)**	30	KirVonte Benson (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	42	**KeShun Freeman (Sr.)**	39	Jordan Woods (Fr.)
DT	54	**Kyle Cerge-Henderson (Jr.)**	97	Brentavious Glanton (So.)
DT	99	Desmond Branch (Jr.)	90	Brandon Adams (So.)
DE	93	Antonio Simmons (Sr.)	94	Anree Saint-Amour (Jr.)
OLB	9	Victor Alexander (Jr.)		Bruce Jordan-Swilling (Fr.)
MLB	51	**Brant Mitchell (Jr.)**	52	Terrell Lewis (Sr.)
CB	8	**Step Durham (Sr.)**	33	Jaytlin Askew (Fr.)
CB	17	**Lance Austin (Sr.)**	6	Lamont Simmons (Jr.)
NB	20	**Lawrence Austin (Sr.)**	34	Gentry Bonds (Fr.)
SS	14	**Corey Griffin (Sr.)**	10	Christian Campbell (So.)
FS	15	**A.J. Gray (Jr.)**	23	Jalen Johnson (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	Brenton King (Fr.)	KR	28 J.J. Green (Sr.)
P	Pressley Harvin III (Fr.)	PR	83 Brad Stewart (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Matthew Jordan, 9-3-111-1, 1 TD
Rushing: Dedrick Mills, 152 att., 771 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Ricky Jeune, 25 rec., 427 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Corey Griffin, 82
Sacks: Anree Saint-Amour, 4.0
Interceptions: Lance Austin, 3; Lawrence Austin, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Paul Johnson
Record at School: 70-48 (9 years)
Career Record: 177-87 (20 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Paul Johnson
Defensive Coordinator: Ted Roof
Atlanta, GA • Bobby Dodd Stadium (55,000)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

MIAMI HURRICANES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **23** • ACC COASTAL PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-4, 5-3 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Bethune-Cookman
Sept.	9	at Arkansas State
Sept.	16	at Florida State
Sept.	23	Toledo
Sept.	29	at Duke
Oct.	12	Georgia Tech
Oct.	21	Syracuse
Oct.	28	at North Carolina
Nov.	4	Virginia Tech
Nov.	11	Notre Dame
Nov.	18	Virginia
Nov.	24	at Pittsburgh

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 5-3 ACC

Sept.	3	Florida A&M	W	70-3
Sept.	10	Florida Atlantic	W	38-10
Sept.	17	at Appalachian State	W	45-10
Oct.	1	at Georgia Tech	W	35-21
Oct.	8	Florida State	L	19-20
Oct.	15	North Carolina	L	13-20
Oct.	20	at Virginia Tech	L	16-37
Oct.	29	at Notre Dame	L	27-30
Nov.	5	Pittsburgh	W	51-28
Nov.	12	at Virginia	W	34-14
Nov.	19	at NC State	W	27-13
Nov.	26	Duke	W	40-21
Dec.	28	vs. West Virginia #	W	31-14

#Russell Athletic Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jeff Thomas, WR, East St. Louis, IL
2. Navaughn Donaldson, OL, Miami, FL
3. D.J. Johnson, DL, Sacramento, CA
4. N'Kosi Perry, QB, Ocala, FL
5. Trajan Bandy, DB, Miami, FL
6. Kai-Leon Herbert, OL, Plantation, FL
7. DeeJay Dallas, DB, Brunswick, GA
8. Jonathan Garvin, DL, Lake Worth, FL
9. Jhavonte Dean, DB, Homestead, FL*
10. Mike Harley, WR, Fort Lauderdale, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.3 ppg	6	37
Rushing	151.8 ypg	9	93
Passing	274.2 ypg	5	27
Total	425.9 ypg	8	57
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	18.5 ppg	2	12
Rushing	131.8 ypg	7	26
Passing	213.8 ypg	6	47
Total	345.5 ypg	5	20
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+9	+0.69	1	14

STAT CORNER

+2.2

Miami averaged 6.9 yards per play on first down (17th in FBS) and allowed 4.7 (fourth). That plus-2.2 margin was fourth nationally.

OFFENSE If only Brad Kaaya had stayed. Miami's three-year starting quarterback opted to leave for the NFL, throwing a wrench into the Hurricanes' plans to contend for the ACC Championship. There's no reason they can't get there still, but finding a QB1 has been question 1A on Mark Richt's mind for months. He says he won't settle on a starter until fall practice winds down. His options include redshirt junior Malik Rosier, a dual threat who owns the only start (2015 against Duke) on the roster, and incoming four-star recruit N'Kosi Perry, who is raw but is considered an elite talent. Perry may not start the opener, but don't be surprised to see him play this fall. Jack Allison, UM's only QB recruit in the 2016 class, left the team in the spring.

Whoever wins the job can lean on tailback Mark Walton, who rushed for 1,117 yards and 14 touchdowns last year, and star receiver Ahmmon Richards, who broke Michael Irvin's 31-year-old program record for receiving yards by a freshman — and led all freshman nationally — with 934 yards. To open the field for Richards, it's critical for Miami to find ways to offset the loss of standout tight end David Njoku and veteran receiver Stacy Coley. Senior tight end Chris Herndon could be a breakout star, and a recruiting class led by All-America wideouts Jeff Thomas and Mike Harley will help stretch the field.

DEFENSE Last year represented a total turnaround in Miami's defense, and there's no reason it can't once again be among the ACC's best. Every major contributor from a fast, physical front seven returns. At end, senior Chad Thomas and sophomore Joe Jackson combined for 22.5 tackles for a loss and 12.5 sacks last year. Tackles Kendrick Norton and R.J. McIntosh brought a combined 19.5 and 4.5, respectively, to the party. UM brought waves of depth off the bench behind them.

The Hurricanes expect greater things from the starting linebacker trio of Shaq Quarterman, Michael Pinckney and Zach McCloud, who last year were the only trio of true freshmen in the nation to start at linebacker (and first in UM history). With those newcomers (and true freshman Jackson) logging heavy time, the Canes rose from 106th in tackles for a loss to fifth, 115th in yards per rush allowed to 17th, 86th in yards per play allowed to ninth and 77th in points allowed to 12th.

If they are to climb higher, it will be because a rebuilding secondary finds its way. Replacing four senior starters will be tough, but Miami has high hopes for cornerback Dee Delaney, an FCS All-American at The Citadel who transferred in the summer, along with junior safety Jaquan Johnson and a talented recruiting class that will get its feet wet early.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Michael Badgley, who made 21-of-26 field goals and has hit from 57 yards, returns for his senior year. Though the Canes will be breaking in a punter, they shouldn't be too worried. Freshman Zach Feagles was one of the country's top recruits and comes from good stock: His father, Jeff, is in the school's Sports Hall of Fame and had a 22-year NFL career. There is a wealth of return-game options.

FINAL ANALYSIS If Miami finds a quarterback and the secondary settles down, this could be a special year. The Hurricanes have a favorable schedule that includes a tough test early — Florida State in Week 3 — and home/road balance the rest of the way. With the rest of the ACC Coastal rebuilding, the Hurricanes should be able to compete for the division title with an outstanding defense and an offense that does just enough. If Perry arrives early — some inside the program compare him to Deshaun Watson or Lamar Jackson — expectations in South Florida will skyrocket.



MARK WALTON

"Manny (Diaz) does a nice job defensively, but he's a total gimmick guy. He wants to try to prove to people that he's brilliant."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	18	Lawrence Cager (So.)	80	Dayall Harris (Jr.)
WR	8	Braxton Berrios (Sr.)		Jeff Thomas (Fr.)
WR	82	**Ahmmon Richards (So.)**	84	Dionte Mullins (So.)
LT	78	**Tyree St. Louis (Jr.)**	70	George Brown Jr. (So.)
LG	73	**Trevor Darling (Sr.)**	74	Tyler Gauthier (Jr.)
C	68	**Nick Linder (Sr.)**		Corey Gaynor (Fr.)
RG	52	**Kc McDermott (Sr.)**	77	Jahair Jones (Jr.)
RT	55	Navaughn Donaldson (Fr.)	66	Sunny Odogwu (Sr.)
TE	23	**Chris Herndon IV (Sr.)**	87	Michael Irvin II (So.)
QB	12	Malik Rosier (Jr.)		N'Kosi Perry (Fr.)
RB	1	**Mark Walton (Jr.)**	24	Travis Homer (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	9	**Chad Thomas (Sr.)**	31	Demetrius Jackson (Jr.)
DT	7	**Kendrick Norton (Jr.)**	91	Gerald Willis (Jr.)
DT	80	**R.J. McIntosh (Jr.)**	95	Anthony Moten (Sr.)
DE	99	Joe Jackson (So.)	33	**Trent Harris (Sr.)**
SLB	53	**Zach McCloud (So.)**	34	Charles Perry (Jr.)
MLB	55	**Shaq Quarterman (So.)**	57	Mike Smith (Jr.)
WLB	56	**Michael Pinckney (So.)**	58	Darrion Owens (Jr.)
CB		Dee Delaney (Sr.)		Trajan Bandy (Fr.)
CB		Jhavonte Dean (Jr.)	12	Malek Young (So.)
S	4	Jaquan Johnson (Jr.)	20	Robert Knowles (So.)
S	30	Romeo Finley (So.)	5	Amari Carter (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	Michael Badgley (Sr.)	KR		Mike Harley (Fr.)
P		Zach Feagles (Fr.)	PR	8	Braxton Berrios (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Malik Rosier, 4-2-32-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Mark Walton, 209 att., 1,117 yds., 14 TD
Receiving: Ahmmon Richards, 49 rec., 934 yds., 3 TD
Tackles: Shaquille Quarterman, 84
Sacks: Joe Jackson, 8.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mark Richt
Record at School: 9-4 (1 year)
Career Record: 154-55 (16 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Thomas Brown
Defensive Coordinator: Manny Diaz
Coral Gables, FL • Hard Rock Stadium (65,326)

Tom DiPace

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **42** • ACC COASTAL PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 4-4 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	California
Sept.	9	Louisville
Sept.	16	at Old Dominion
Sept.	23	Duke
Sept.	30	at Georgia Tech
Oct.	7	Notre Dame
Oct.	14	Virginia
Oct.	21	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	28	Miami
Nov.	9	at Pittsburgh
Nov.	18	Western Carolina
Nov.	25	at NC State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 ACC

Sept.	3	vs. Georgia #	L	24-33
Sept.	10	at Illinois	W	48-23
Sept.	17	James Madison	W	56-28
Sept.	24	Pittsburgh	W	37-36
Oct.	1	at Florida State	W	37-35
Oct.	8	Virginia Tech	L	3-34
Oct.	15	at Miami	W	20-13
Oct.	22	at Virginia	W	35-14
Nov.	5	Georgia Tech	W	48-20
Nov.	10	at Duke	L	27-28
Nov.	19	The Citadel	W	41-7
Nov.	25	NC State	L	21-28
Dec.	30	vs. Stanford %	L	23-25

#Atlanta %Sun Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jonah Melton, OL, Mebane, NC
2. Jake Lawler, DL, Charlotte, NC
3. C.J. Cotman, DB, Clearwater, FL
4. Xach Gill, DL, Wake Forest, NC
5. Tre Shaw, DB, Ellenwood, GA
6. J.T. Cauthen, WR, Waxhaw, NC
7. Billy Ross, OL, Huntington, WV
8. Michael Carter, RB, Navarre, FL
9. Jordon Riley, DL, Durham, NC
10. Antwuan Branch, RB, Clarksville, TN

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.3 ppg	7	44
Rushing	145.8 ypg	11	100
Passing	293.2 ypg	3	22
Total	439.0 ypg	7	45
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.9 ppg	8	43
Rushing	227.3 ypg	14	109
Passing	180.8 ypg	1	12
Total	408.1 ypg	10	63
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-2	-0.15	11	78

STAT CORNER

52

On rushes of third or fourth down, with two or fewer yards to go, UNC's rushing success rate was just 52 percent, 127th in FBS.

OFFENSE If North Carolina again fields a high-powered offense that has become its trademark, it will do so despite major personnel changes. The Tar Heels lost 99.0 percent of their rushing yards, 98.3 percent of their passing yards, 70.5 percent of their receiving yards and 85.7 percent of their scoring from a year ago.

The identity of the starting quarterback will be decided in training camp, but LSU graduate transfer Brandon Harris is the favorite. Harris is the only quarterback on the roster with starting experience, and his dual-threat ability is ideal for UNC's spread attack. The receivers have plenty to prove, regardless of who is delivering the passes. Senior Austin Proehl is the only player on the roster with more than 275 career receiving yards.

Harris isn't the only graduate transfer who figures to have a significant role. Stanton Truitt from Auburn will get reps in a backfield that features just one player (sophomore Jordon Brown) who had carries for UNC a year ago. Freshman Michael Carter also will get significant playing time.

Up front, grad transfers Cam Dillard from Florida and Khaliel Rodgers from USC will add needed depth to the offensive line. The group returns three-year starter Bentley Spain at left tackle and promising sophomore Tommy Hatton at guard, but creating cohesion during training camp will be key.

DEFENSE UNC has taken steps forward defensively in each of the last two years, but more improvement is needed in 2017 to offset the lost offensive firepower. The Tar Heels have a new coordinator in former linebackers coach John Papuchis, who took over when Gene Chizik resigned for family reasons, but the scheme will remain the same. The defensive line returns 11 of its top 13 contributors, including team sack leader Malik Carney, from a year ago. But improvement against the run, where the Tar Heels allowed an ACC-worst 227.3 yards per game, is paramount. UNC returns its top five linebackers, which should help improve the run defense now that they have a year of experience. Andre Smith is the headliner of the group, providing a hard-hitting presence in the middle of the field.

The secondary, which was the strength of last year's defense despite totaling an NCAA-worst one interception, has a nice mixture of proven talent and potential. M.J. Stewart is one of the ACC's top cornerbacks, and Donnie Miles is a sure-tackling safety. A large group of young players — including four who played last year as true freshmen — will rotate in and gain experience.

SPECIALISTS The loss of kicker Nick Weiler and returners Ryan Switzer and T.J. Logan, who were multi-year stars in their respective roles, leaves the Tar Heels vulnerable in the kicking game. On the positive side, punter Tom Sheldon is back after allowing opponents a total of two yards on punt returns (best in the nation) last season. Freeman Jones could be a capable replacement for Weiler, but he has yet to be tested in game situations.

FINAL ANALYSIS Hopes were high a year ago, but the Tar Heels fell short in their quest to reach the ACC Championship Game for the second year in a row. While the Coastal Division race remains as unpredictable as ever, UNC probably has too much uncertainty to be considered a legitimate threat. Are there enough playmakers on offense? Can the graduate transfers provide a big lift immediately? Can the defense become an asset instead of a liability? Can the team hold its own on special teams? The Tar Heels have enough talent to earn a fifth consecutive postseason berth, but doing so probably won't be easy.



M.J. STEWART

"They could win the division or finish toward the bottom, but they'll score points. That system has withstood the test of time."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	7	**Austin Proehl (Sr.)**	48	Thomas Jackson (Sr.)	
WR	17	Anthony Ratliff-Williams (So.)	5	Juval Mollette (So.)	
WR	15	Jordan Cunningham (Sr.)	8	J.T. Cauthen (Fr.)	
LT	75	**Bentley Spain (Sr.)**	72	Mason Veal (So.)	
LG	52	**Tommy Hatton (So.)**	58	Nick Polino (So.)	
C		Cam Dillard (Sr.)	55	Jay-Jay McCargo (Fr.)	
RG	71	**R.J. Prince (Sr.)**		Khaliel Rodgers (Sr.)	
RT	51	William Sweet (So.)	67	Charlie Heck (So.)	
TE	82	**Brandon Fritts (Jr.)**	86	**Carl Tucker (So.)**	
QB		Brandon Harris (Sr.)	11	Nathan Elliott (So.)	
RB	3	Michael Carter (Fr.)	2	Jordon Brown (So.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	17	Dajaun Drennon (Sr.)	95	Tyler Powell (Sr.)
DT	92	**Aaron Crawford (So.)**	97	Jalen Dalton (Jr.)
DT	55	Jason Strowbridge (So.)	49	Jeremiah Clarke (Jr.)
DE	53	**Malik Carney (Jr.)**	12	Tomon Fox (Fr.)
MLB	10	**Andre Smith (Jr.)**	7	Jonathan Smith (So.)
SLB	23	Cayson Collins (Sr.)	25	Ayden Bonilla (Jr.)
WLB	36	**Cole Holcomb (Jr.)**	3	Dominique Ross (So.)
CB	6	**M.J. Stewart (Sr.)**	18	Corey Bell Jr. (Jr.)
CB	5	Patrice Rene (So.)	9	K.J. Sails (So.)
FS	1	Myles Dorn (So.)	29	J.K. Britt (Jr.)
SS	15	**Donnie Miles (Sr.)**	16	D.J. Ford (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Freeman Jones (Jr.)	KR	17	A. Ratliff-Williams (So.)
P	39	Tom Sheldon (So.)	PR	7	Austin Proehl (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nathan Elliott, 9-8-55-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Jordon Brown, 20 att., 45 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Austin Proehl, 43 rec., 597 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Cole Holcomb, 115
Sacks: Malik Carney, 5.5
Interceptions: None

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Larry Fedora
Record at School: 40-25 (5 years)
Career Record: 74-44 (9 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Gunter Brewer, Chris Kapilovic
Defensive Coordinator: John Papuchis
Chapel Hill, NC • Kenan Memorial Stadium (63,000)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

PITTSBURGH PANTHERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **31** • ACC COASTAL PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Youngstown State
Sept.	9	at Penn State
Sept.	16	Oklahoma State
Sept.	23	at Georgia Tech
Sept.	30	Rice
Oct.	7	at Syracuse
Oct.	14	NC State
Oct.	21	at Duke
Oct.	28	Virginia
Nov.	9	North Carolina
Nov.	18	at Virginia Tech
Nov.	24	Miami

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 ACC

Sept.	3	Villanova	W	28-7
Sept.	10	Penn State	W	42-39
Sept.	17	at Oklahoma State	L	38-45
Sept.	24	at North Carolina	L	36-37
Oct.	1	Marshall	W	43-27
Oct.	8	Georgia Tech	W	37-34
Oct.	15	at Virginia	W	45-31
Oct.	27	Virginia Tech	L	36-39
Nov.	5	at Miami	L	28-51
Nov.	12	at Clemson	W	43-42
Nov.	19	Duke	W	56-14
Nov.	26	Syracuse	W	76-61
Dec.	28	vs. Northwestern #	L	24-31

#Pinstripe Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Paris Ford, DB, Pittsburgh, PA
2. A.J. Davis, RB, Lakeland, FL
3. Todd Sibley, RB, Akron, OH
4. Charles Reeves, TE, Steubenville, OH
5. Carter Warren, OL, Paterson, NJ
6. Jaylen Twyman, DL, Washington, DC
7. Damarri Mathis, DB, Lakeland, FL
8. Jerry Drake, OL, Palm Beach Gardens, FL
9. Kamonte Carter, DL, Germantown, MD
10. Kyle Nunn, LB, Findlay, OH

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	40.9 ppg	2	10
Rushing	225.1 ypg	3	28
Passing	221.7 ypg	11	76
Total	446.8 ypg	4	38
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	35.2 ppg	13	106
Rushing	119.6 ypg	4	16
Passing	333.2 ypg	14	127
Total	452.8 ypg	13	101
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	7	58

STAT CORNER

7.4

Pitt's rebuilt offense faces a really high bar: The Panthers averaged 7.4 yards per play on first down in 2016, seventh in FBS.

OFFENSE If the Pittsburgh offense has any hope of duplicating its explosive numbers from last season, graduate transfer Max Browne must emerge as a capable replacement for two-year starting quarterback Nathan Peterman. A former five-star recruit who played three seasons at USC, Browne lost his job last fall after his third career start. He believes he can reignite his career in Pittsburgh, which went 8–5 and upset eventual national champion Clemson and Big Ten champ Penn State. The challenge for Browne and the rest of the offense is overcoming the departures of coordinator Matt Canada (who left for LSU), record-setting running back James Conner and Peterman, the 2016 ACC pass-efficiency leader. That trio helped Pittsburgh rank 10th nationally at 40.9 points per game.

Despite the losses, third-year coach Pat Narduzzi's team is not bereft of playmakers. Junior Qadree Ollison stepped in for an injured Conner in 2015 and ran for 1,121 yards, earning ACC Offensive Rookie of the Year honors. Also, Pittsburgh landed a stud back in freshman A.J. Davis.

Wideouts Jester Weah and Quadree Henderson are electric. Weah, a legit speedster, ranked second nationally at 24.2 yards per reception. He had 36 catches and 10 touchdowns. Henderson did it all, producing 10 touchdowns via runs (five), receptions (one) and returns (four). His average of 160.2 all-purpose yards ranked 11th nationally.

The offensive line lost two All-ACC performers but returns three experienced starters. Tackle Brian O'Neill and guard Alex Bookser both earned All-ACC honors.

DEFENSE With seven starters gone, the Panthers are hoping there can be a case of addition by subtraction on defense. Despite tying for eighth nationally in sacks and ranking 16th against the run, the defense was porous. It ranked 106th in points allowed (35.2 ppg) and second to last in pass defense (333.2 ypg).

Immediate relief should come in the form of Jordan Whitehead, a junior strong safety who missed four games (three with a broken arm). The 2015 ACC Rookie of the Year, Whitehead is a bona fide star, in the mold of former Pittsburgh great Darrelle Revis. Senior Avonte Maddox, who has led the Panthers in pass breakups and interceptions the past two seasons, returns at the boundary corner.

Questions abound about a front seven that features five new starters. The Panthers need defensive end Dewayne Hendrix to be a game-changer. A transfer from Tennessee, Hendrix has the size and athleticism to be a disruptive force, a necessity for a unit that must get better. Quickly.

SPECIALISTS Redshirt freshman Alex Kessman has the task of replacing the top-scoring placekicker in program history in Chris Blewitt. Senior Ryan Winslow enters his fourth season as the punter. Henderson led the nation in kickoff return touchdowns (three) and ranked third and fifth in punt and kickoff returns, respectively.

FINAL ANALYSIS Pittsburgh made headlines by defeating national champion Clemson and Big Ten champ Penn State last season. The question is: What can it do for an encore? "We did some good things," says Narduzzi, whose team lost four games by seven points or fewer. "But we still have work to do."

Despite the loss of 12 starters, and a schedule that features back-to-back games with Penn State and Oklahoma State, Narduzzi believes the wins will keep coming. "The culture we've got going on right now and the enthusiasm of the players is at a high level," he says.

Based on his first two seasons and a couple of strong recruiting classes, there is reason to believe Narduzzi can produce another solid year for the Panthers.



JORDAN WHITEHEAD

"Last year, people threw for 400 yards on them regularly. It's just a matter of how good you are throwing the football."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	85	**Jester Weah (Sr.)**	6	Aaron Mathews (So.)
WR	10	**Quadree Henderson (Jr.)**	5	Tre Tipton (So.)
LT	70	**Brian O'Neill (Jr.)**	59	Tony Pilato (So.)
LG	63	**Alex Officer (Sr.)**	56	Brandon Ford (Fr.)
C	76	Connor Dintino (Jr.)	63	Alex Officer (Sr.)
RG	78	**Alex Bookser (Jr.)**	54	Justin Morgan (Fr.)
RT	55	Jaryd Jones-Smith (Sr.)	71	Bryce Hargrove (Fr.)
TE	87	Chris Clark (So.)	45	Devon Edwards (Sr.)
QB	4	Max Browne (Sr.)	7	Thomas MacVittie (Fr.)
RB	37	Qadree Ollison (Jr.)		A.J. Davis (Fr.)
FB	35	**George Aston (Jr.)**	26	Chawntez Moss (So.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	8	Dewayne Hendrix (Jr.)	96	Allen Edwards (Sr.)
DT	94	Jeremiah Taleni (Sr.)	10	Keyshon Camp (Fr.)
DT	34	Amir Watts (So.)	93	Shane Roy (Jr.)
DE	92	**Rori Blair (Sr.)**	40	James Folston (Jr.)
OLB	39	Saleem Brightwell (So.)	25	Elijah Zeise (Jr.)
MLB	58	Quintin Wirginis (Sr.)	36	Chase Pine (Fr.)
OLB	23	**Oluwaseun Idowu (Jr.)**	28	Anthony McKee (So.)
CB	14	**Avonte Maddox (Sr.)**	32	Phillipie Motley (Jr.)
CB	11	Dane Jackson (So.)	3	Damar Hamlin (So.)
SS	9	**Jordan Whitehead (Jr.)**	20	Dennis Briggs (Jr.)
FS	43	Jay Stocker (So.)		Paris Ford (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	97	Alex Kessman (Fr.)	KR	10	Quadree Henderson (Jr.)
P	18	Ryan Winslow (Sr.)	PR	10	Quadree Henderson (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ben DiNucci, 9-3-16-2, 1 TD
Rushing: Quadree Henderson, 60 att., 631 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Jester Weah, 36 rec., 870 yds., 10 TDs
Tackles: Oluwaseun Idowu, 74
Sacks: Quintin Wirginis, 4.0
Interceptions: Avonte Maddox, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Pat Narduzzi
Record at School: 16-10 (2 years)
Career Record: 16-10 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Shawn Watson
Defensive Coordinator: Josh Conklin
Pittsburgh, PA • Heinz Field (68,400)

Bruce Schwartzman

VIRGINIA CAVALIERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **87** • ACC COASTAL PREDICTIONS: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 1-7 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	William & Mary
Sept. 9	Indiana
Sept. 16	Connecticut
Sept. 22	at Boise State
Oct. 7	Duke
Oct. 14	at North Carolina
Oct. 21	Boston College
Oct. 28	at Pittsburgh
Nov. 4	Georgia Tech
Nov. 11	at Louisville
Nov. 18	at Miami
Nov. 24	Virginia Tech

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 2-10, 1-7 ACC

Sept. 3	Richmond	L	20-37
Sept. 10	at Oregon	L	26-44
Sept. 17	at Connecticut	L	10-13
Sept. 24	Central Michigan	W	49-35
Oct. 1	at Duke	W	34-20
Oct. 15	Pittsburgh	L	31-45
Oct. 22	North Carolina	L	14-35
Oct. 29	Louisville	L	25-32
Nov. 5	at Wake Forest	L	20-27
Nov. 12	Miami	L	14-34
Nov. 19	at Georgia Tech	L	17-31
Nov. 26	at Virginia Tech	L	10-52

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Ryan Nelson, OL, Buena Park, CA
2. Germane Crowell, DB, Winston Salem, NC
3. Zane Zandier, LB, Pittsburgh, PA
4. Shawn Smith, WR, Brunswick, GA
5. Lindell Stone, QB, Dallas, TX
6. Lamont Atkins, RB, Burke, VA
7. Jamari Peacock, RB, Yulee, FL
8. Tommy Christ, DL, Sterling, VA
9. Chris Glaser, OL, Solon, OH
10. Tyler Fannin, OL, Hoschton, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	XXX	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.5 ppg	12	115
Rushing	113.6 ypg	14	121
Passing	239.3 ypg	10	61
Total	352.9 ypg	12	112
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**XXX**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	33.8 ppg	12	99
Rushing	190.0 ypg	12	78
Passing	256.6 ypg	12	103
Total	446.6 ypg	12	93
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**XXX**	**NATIONAL**
-9	-0.75	14	117

STAT CORNER

+7.9

Virginia's field position margin improved by 7.9 yards per drive despite a -9 turnover margin. Great punting can be an effective weapon.

OFFENSE Virginia was last in the ACC in rushing, the product of an offensive line that couldn't create any daylight in the run game. Pass protection was only marginally better. Quarterback Kurt Benkert took some shots early in the season, became skittish in the pocket and was benched later on in favor of Matt Johns.

With Johns graduated, its Benkert's show again. The strong-armed East Carolina transfer now has a year in the system, is 15 pounds lighter and has shed the brace he wore to protect the knee he injured before the 2015 season. For a change of pace, Virginia has also brought in dual-threat quarterback Marvin Zanders, a transfer from Missouri.

There are potential playmakers in receivers Olamide Zaccheaus and Doni Dowling, who combined for 101 catches last year. There's also promising young talent in sophomores Joe Reed and Hasise Dubois.

Tailback Taquan Mizzell was the Offensive MVP last year. Daniel Hamm is the top candidate to replace him, though rugged Jordan Ellis and freshman Lamont Atkins will also be in the mix. Everything once again hinges on the line, which returns two starters in guard Jack McDonald and tackle Jack English. Three graduate transfers were added as a short-term Band-Aid while the younger linemen are developed. There's a need for improved physicality across the board.

DEFENSE Few players in the nation were busier than linebacker Micah Kiser and free safety Quin Blanding, the top tackling tandem in the ACC. Kiser led the league and was third in the nation with 134 stops. Blanding was second in the league and 16th in the nation with 120. Both flirted with entering the NFL Draft before opting to return. While that's good for Virginia, it would be even better if they didn't have to be quite so productive this year.

The Cavaliers never got a handle on big plays in 2016 and will need to improve on the back end. With Blanding again lining everyone up, and with cornerbacks Tim Harris, Darious Latimore and Myles Robinson returning from injuries, Virginia should be better in pass coverage.

Up front, Virginia must replace nose tackle Donte Wilkins, the hub of the Cavaliers' three-man front. But they have a potentially elite pass rusher in defensive end Andrew Brown and the ultimate man in the middle of the linebacking corps in Kiser, who led the team with 6.5 sacks and forced five fumbles.

SPECIALISTS Placekicking was an adventure last season, but help is on the way in freshman Brian Delaney, a *Parade* All-American. All-ACC punter Nicholas Conte leaves big shoes to fill, but the return game is solid. Hamm and Reed ranked among the best in the ACC as return specialists.

FINAL ANALYSIS With a track record of success at BYU, a reputation for instilling order and accountability, and methods and metrics straight out of a business management text, Bronco Mendenhall seemed to have an answer for every contingency when he arrived at Virginia, playfully warning fans not to make travel plans during bowl season.

Reality hit home when the season started, however, and by the end of a 2–10 campaign, Mendenhall admitted he'd underestimated the scope of the rebuilding project. Expectations have been re-calibrated, with Mendenhall cautioning that a turnaround could take a while. After laying the cultural foundation last season, he's turning his attention to improving the execution that was so woefully lacking.

With a tighter on-field operation and a fair amount of talent returning, Virginia could be better, but fans likely won't need to alter their bowl season travel plans just yet.



QUIN BLANDING

"The coaches there have won a lot of games and they know what they're doing, but they need to adapt what they do to the kids on their team."
– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	7	**Doni Dowling (Sr.)**	80	Hasise Dubois (So.)	
WR	33	**Olamide Zaccheaus (Jr.)**	23	Warren Craft (So.)	
WR	81	Joe Reed (So.)	19	Andre Levrone (Sr.)	
LT	67	**Jack English (Sr.)**		Brandon Pertile (Sr.)	
LG		John Montelus (Sr.)	70	Steven Moss (Jr.)	
C	77	Jake Fieler (Jr.)	79	Dillon Reinkensmeyer (So.)	
RG	71	**Jack McDonald (Sr.)**	65	Ben Knutson (So.)	
RT	78	R.J. Proctor (So.)		Colin McGovern (Sr.)	
QB	6	**Kurt Benkert (Sr.)**		Marvin Zanders (Jr.)	
RB	10	Jordan Ellis (Jr.)		Jamari Peacock (Fr.)	
TB	22	Daniel Hamm (Sr.)		Lamont Atkins (Fr.)	

DEFENSE (8)

DE	9	**Andrew Brown (Sr.)**	90	Jack Powers (Sr.)
NT	95	Juwan Moye (So.)	57	James Trucilla (So.)
DE	58	**Eli Hanback (So.)**	20	Steven Wright (So.)
OLB	13	**Chris Peace (Jr.)**	36	Gladimir Paul (So.)
ILB	37	**Jordan Mack (So.)**	40	C.J. Stalker (Jr.)
ILB	53	**Micah Kiser (Sr.)**	42	Jahvoni Simmons (So.)
OLB	17	Malcolm Cook (Sr.)	29	Eric Gallon (Jr.)
CB	5	Tim Harris (Sr.)	14	Myles Robinson (Jr.)
CB	34	**Bryce Hall (So.)**	31	Kareem Gibson (So.)
SS	21	**Juan Thornhill (Jr.)**	25	Chris Sharp (So.)
FS	3	**Quin Blanding (Sr.)**	39	Chris Moore (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Brian Delaney (Fr.)	KR	81	Joe Reed (So.)
P	47	Lester Coleman (Jr.)	PR	22	Daniel Hamm (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kurt Benkert, 406-228-2,552-11, 21 TDs
Rushing: Jordan Ellis, 14 att., 61 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Olamide Zaccheaus, 51 rec., 584 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Micah Kiser, 134
Sacks: Micah Kiser, 6.5
Interceptions: Juan Thornhill, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bronco Mendenhall
Record at School: 2-10 (1 year)
Career Record: 101-53 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Robert Anae
Defensive Coordinator: Nick Howell
Charlottesville, VA • Scott Stadium (61,500)

Bruce Schwartzman

VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **25** • ACC COASTAL PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-3, 5-3 ACC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	3	vs. West Virginia #
Sept.	9	Delaware
Sept.	16	at East Carolina
Sept.	23	Old Dominion
Sept.	30	Clemson
Oct.	7	at Boston College
Oct.	21	North Carolina
Oct.	28	Duke
Nov.	4	at Miami
Nov.	11	at Georgia Tech
Nov.	18	Pittsburgh
Nov.	24	at Virginia

#Landover, MD

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-4, 6-2 ACC

Sept.	3	Liberty	W	36-13
Sept.	10	vs. Tennessee #	L	24-45
Sept.	17	Boston College	W	49-0
Sept.	24	East Carolina	W	54-17
Oct.	8	at North Carolina	W	34-3
Oct.	15	at Syracuse	L	17-31
Oct.	20	Miami	W	37-16
Oct.	27	at Pittsburgh	W	39-36
Nov.	5	at Duke	W	24-21
Nov.	12	Georgia Tech	L	20-30
Nov.	19	at Notre Dame	W	34-31
Nov.	26	Virginia	W	52-10
Dec.	3	vs. Clemson %	L	35-42
Dec.	29	vs. Arkansas $	W	35-24

#Bristol %Orlando $Belk Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Devon Hunter, DB, Chesapeake, VA
2. Nathan Proctor, DE, Indian Head, MD
3. Dylan Rivers, LB, Sherando, VA
4. TyJuan Garbutt, DE, Fredericksburg, VA
5. Hendon Hooker, QB, Greensboro, NC
6. Caleb Farley, ATH, Hickory, NC
7. Drake Deluliis, TE, Charlotte, NC
8. Dalton Keene, TE , Littleton, CO
9. Jalen Holston, RB, Stockbridge, GA
10. Sean Savoy, WR, Washington, DC

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	ACC	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.0 ppg	5	33
Rushing	183.1 ypg	5	55
Passing	261.9 ypg	7	35
Total	444.9 ypg	5	39
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.8 ppg	5	28
Rushing	140.5 ypg	8	32
Passing	200.2 ypg	3	26
Total	340.7 ypg	4	18
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**ACC**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.07	9	72

STAT CORNER

+5.5

Virginia Tech's field position margin was plus-5.5 yards per possession, first in the ACC. Beamerball didn't leave when Frank Beamer did.

OFFENSE It'll be a changing of the guard for the Hokies offense, with quarterback Jerod Evans, receiver Isaiah Ford and tight end Bucky Hodges all turning pro a year early, not to mention some big senior contributors graduating from last year.

Quarterback will be the focus, although coach Justin Fuente is more concerned about the surrounding pieces. Redshirt freshman Josh Jackson figures to have a leg up in the quarterback battle after displaying maturity and decision-making beyond his age in his first year on campus.

But Tech needs playmakers to complement him. Receiver Cam Phillips returns and could finish his career as the Hokies' all-time leading receiver, but the experience drops off quickly after him, with youngsters Eric Kumah and Phil Patterson vying for snaps.

A veteran left side of the line led by Yosuah Nijman and Wyatt Teller could help out what was an inconsistent group of running backs last year. Travon McMillian (671 yards, 10 total TDs) returns, but the tailback competition should be wide open.

DEFENSE Bud Foster's defenses thrive when they have experience, and Virginia Tech will have that in bunches in the linebacking corps and secondary this season. The linebackers are the strength of the group, led by Andrew Motuapuaka (114 tackles, fifth in the ACC) and Tremaine Edmunds (18.5 tackles for a loss) on the inside and Mook Reynolds, an effective hybrid player with cover abilities, on the outside.

Terrell Edmunds, who had a breakout 2016, slides over from rover to take the departed Chuck Clark's free safety spot, while the cornerback trio of Brandon Facyson, Greg Stroman and Adonis Alexander could be one of the best in the ACC. That group helped the Hokies intercept 16 passes last year, second in the ACC.

The line had significant turnover, but Tech has some talent coming up the ranks. Ricky Walker, who started four games last year, and 328-pound Tim Settle move into the starting defensive tackle spots. Vinny Mihota started last year at end, and Trevon Hill is a breakout candidate rushing off the blind side.

The Hokies figure to find a spot for prized safety signee Devon Hunter, who's drawn Kam Chancellor comparisons.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Joey Slye should pass Shayne Graham as the Hokies' all-time leading scorer sometime in the first half of the season, although his strong leg still hasn't produced a 50-yard field goal in eight college attempts. Aussie Oscar Bradburn is expected to take over the punting job as a true freshman. His only experience is in Australian rules football, but he comes from the same kicking camp that's produced the last four Ray Guy Award winners. Stroman's a threat to take every punt to the house, and the kick return game got a boost from Henri Murphy late last year.

FINAL ANALYSIS Fuente had plenty of success after succeeding the legendary Frank Beamer as Virginia Tech's coach, returning the school to its 10-win standard, claiming the Coastal Division title for the first time since 2011 and giving Clemson all it could handle in the ACC title game. Now comes the harder part: restoring the Hokies to their former mantle as ACC champions. The offensive exodus will challenge this team, particularly early, but Hokies fans hope a full year in the new system, several key returning pieces and Fuente's offensive acumen can offset some of the loss of talent. It helps to have Foster's always-trusty defense. In a Coastal Division that doesn't figure to have a clear-cut frontrunner, there are plenty of reasons to believe Virginia Tech has as good a chance as anybody.



TREMAINE EDMUNDS

"I've coached in a lot of leagues, and they probably have as good a home-field advantage as you'll find just about anywhere outside the SEC."

– An opposing ACC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	5	**Cam Phillips (Sr.)**	12	Henri Murphy (Jr.)
WR	83	Eric Kumah (So.)	8	Phil Patterson (Fr.)
LT	69	**Yosuah Nijman (Jr.)**	71	T.J. Jackson (Fr.)
LG	57	**Wyatt Teller (Sr.)**	61	Kyle Chung (Sr.)
C	64	**Eric Gallo (Sr.)**	75	Zachariah Hoyt (Fr.)
RG	74	Braxton Pfaff (Jr.)	67	Parker Osterloh (Sr.)
RT	79	Tyrell Smith (So.)	62	D'Andre Plantin (So.)
TE	85	Chris Cunningham (So.)	80	Colt Pettit (So.)
HB	29	Dalton Keene (Fr.)		Drake Deluliis (Fr.)
QB	17	Josh Jackson (Fr.)	6	A.J. Bush (Jr.)
RB	34	**Travon McMillian (Jr.)**	32	Steven Peoples (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	94	Trevon Hill (So.)	40	Emmanuel Belmar (Fr.)
DT	4	Tim Settle (So.)	55	Jarrod Hewitt (Fr.)
DT	8	Ricky Walker (Jr.)	47	Darius Fullwood (So.)
DE	99	**Vinny Mihota (Jr.)**	11	Houshun Gaines (So.)
OLB	6	**Mook Reynolds (Jr.)**	24	Anthony Shegog (Sr.)
ILB	54	**Andrew Motuapuaka (Sr.)**	14	Tavante Beckett (So.)
ILB	49	**Tremaine Edmunds (Jr.)**	56	Sean Huelskamp (Sr.)
CB	31	**Brandon Facyson (Sr.)**	26	Jovonn Quillen (So.)
CB	3	**Greg Stroman (Sr.)**	36	Adonis Alexander (Jr.)
SS	21	Reggie Floyd (So.)		Devon Hunter (Fr.)
FS	22	**Terrell Edmunds (Jr.)**	17	Divine Deablo (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	46	Joey Slye (Sr.)	KR	3	Greg Stroman (Sr.)
P	91	Oscar Bradburn (Fr.)	PR	12	Henri Murphy (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jack Click, 1-0-0-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Travon McMillian, 145 att., 671yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Cam Phillips, 76 rec., 983 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Andrew Motuapuaka, 114
Sacks: Tremaine Edmunds, 4.5
Interceptions: Terrell Edmunds, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Justin Fuente
Record at School: 10-4 (1 year)
Career Record: 36-27 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brad Cornelsen
Defensive Coordinator: Bud Foster
Blacksburg, VA • Lane Stadium (65,632)

Chris Keane

AMERICAN PREVIEW


QUINTON FLOWERS

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	EAST	WEST
1	USF BULLS 12-1, 7-1	MEMPHIS TIGERS 9-4, 6-2
2	UCF KNIGHTS 7-5, 5-3	NAVY MIDSHIPMEN 8-4, 5-3
3	TEMPLE OWLS 6-6, 4-4	HOUSTON COUGARS 7-5, 5-3
4	CINCINNATI BEARCATS 4-8, 2-6	TULSA GOLDEN HURRICANE 7-5, 5-3
5	CONNECTICUT HUSKIES 3-9, 2-6	SMU MUSTANGS 6-6, 3-5
6	EAST CAROLINA PIRATES 3-9, 2-6	TULANE GREEN WAVE 4-8, 2-6

American Athletic Conference Championship: USF over Memphis

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Military Bowl: Wake Forest 34, Temple 26
Armed Forces Bowl: Louisiana Tech 48, Navy 45
Birmingham Bowl: USF 46, South Carolina 39 (OT)
Las Vegas Bowl: San Diego State 34, Houston 10
Miami Beach Bowl: Tulsa 55, Central Michigan 10
Boca Raton Bowl: Western Kentucky 51, Memphis 31
Cure Bowl: Arkansas State 31, UCF 13

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Chick-fil-A Bowl: USF vs. Auburn
Frisco Bowl: Memphis vs. Toledo
Military Bowl: Navy vs. Georgia Tech
Hawaii Bowl: Houston vs. Hawaii
Birmingham Bowl: Tulsa vs. Vanderbilt
Boca Raton Bowl: UCF vs. Middle Tennessee
St. Petersburg Bowl: Temple vs. WKU
Cure Bowl: SMU vs. South Alabama

Flowers: AP; Brewer: Brett Rojo/Tulsa Athletics

2016 AAC STANDINGS

EAST	AAC	OVERALL	WEST	AAC	OVERALL
USF	7-1	11-2	NAVY	7-1	9-5
TEMPLE	7-1	10-4	TULSA	6-2	10-3
UCF	4-4	6-7	HOUSTON	5-3	9-4
CINCINNATI	1-7	4-8	MEMPHIS	5-3	8-5
CONNECTICUT	1-7	3-9	SMU	3-5	5-7
EAST CAROLINA	1-7	3-9	TULANE	1-7	4-8

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. UCF
2. Memphis
3. Cincinnati
4. Houston
5. USF
6. East Carolina
7. SMU
8. Navy
9. Tulsa
10. Connecticut
11. Tulane
12. Temple

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
CINCINNATI	9	9	9	11	8	9	9
CONNECTICUT	12	10	10	12	6	2	10
EAST CAROLINA	8	12	4	7	12	10	6
HOUSTON	3	11	5	8	1	6	5
MEMPHIS	2	4	3	4	9	1	7
NAVY	5	7	12	3	11	3	11
SMU	4	3	1	6	10	11	12
TEMPLE	11	2	2	5	4	8	1
TULANE	10	8	11	10	5	12	3
TULSA	7	1	7	1	7	7	4
UCF	6	6	6	9	2	5	8
USF	1	5	8	2	3	4	2



D'ANGELO BREWER

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Quinton Flowers	6-0	210	Sr.	USF
RB	Ryquell Armstead	5-11	205	Jr.	Temple
RB	D'Angelo Brewer	5-9	190	Sr.	Tulsa
AP	Braeden West	5-10	165	Jr.	SMU
WR	Linell Bonner	6-0	202	Sr.	Houston
WR	Anthony Miller	5-11	190	Sr.	Memphis
WR	Courtland Sutton	6-4	218	Jr.	SMU
C	Chandler Miller	6-3	293	Jr.	Tulsa
OL	Tyler Bowling	6-6	325	Jr.	Tulsa
OL	Evan Brown	6-3	308	Sr.	SMU
OL	Evan Martin	6-3	294	Sr.	Navy
OL	Evan Plagg	6-3	295	Sr.	Tulsa

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Cortez Broughton	6-2	297	Jr.	Cincinnati
DL	Justin Lawler	6-4	266	Sr.	SMU
DL	Ed Oliver	6-2	290	So.	Houston
DL	Deadrin Senat	6-1	305	Sr.	USF
LB	Genard Avery	6-1	255	Sr.	Memphis
LB	Shaquem Griffin	6-1	213	Sr.	UCF
LB	Auggie Sanchez	6-2	245	Sr.	USF
CB	Deatrick Nichols	5-10	189	Sr.	USF
CB	Parry Nickerson	6-0	180	Sr.	Tulane
S	Sean Chandler	6-0	190	Sr.	Temple
S	Garrett Davis	6-1	200	Jr.	Houston

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Aaron Boumerhi	6-0	195	So.	Temple
P	Spencer Smith	6-1	195	Sr.	Memphis
KR	Tony Pollard	5-11	200	So.	Memphis
PR	D'Ernest Johnson	5-10	208	Sr.	USF

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Riley Ferguson	6-4	210	Sr.	Memphis
RB	Mike Boone	5-10	205	Sr.	Cincinnati
RB	Dontrell Hilliard	6-0	205	Sr.	Tulane
AP	Arkeel Newsome	5-7	180	Sr.	Connecticut
WR	Ventell Bryant	6-3	189	Jr.	Temple
WR	Tre'Quan Smith	6-1	200	Jr.	UCF
WR	Jimmy Williams	5-11	194	Sr.	East Carolina
C	Cameron Ruff	6-3	320	Sr.	USF
OL	Drew Kyser	6-5	300	Jr.	Memphis
OL	Gabe Kuhn	6-4	295	Sr.	Memphis
OL	Will Noble	6-4	290	Jr.	Houston
OL	Andrew Wood	6-4	290	Jr.	Navy

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Jesse Brubaker	6-3	270	Sr.	Tulsa
DL	Tony Guerad	6-3	275	Sr.	UCF
DL	Bruce Hector	6-2	296	Sr.	USF
DL	Jamiyus Pittman	6-0	295	Sr.	UCF
LB	Matthew Adams	6-1	230	Sr.	Houston
LB	Junior Joseph	6-1	242	Sr.	Connecticut
LB	Micah Thomas	6-1	249	Sr.	Navy
CB	Jamar Summers	6-0	185	Sr.	Connecticut
CB	Jordan Wyatt	6-0	192	Jr.	SMU
S	Alohi Gilman	6-0	200	So.	Navy
S	Delvon Randall	5-11	208	Jr.	Temple

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Matthew Wright	6-0	185	Jr.	UCF
P	Jonathan Hernandez	6-4	241	Sr.	USF
KR	Adrian Killins Jr.	5-8	155	So.	UCF
PR	Chris Johnson	5-10	176	Sr.	UCF

CINCINNATI BEARCATS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **95** • AAC EAST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 2-6 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	Austin Peay	
Sept. 9	at Michigan	
Sept. 16	at Miami (Ohio)	
Sept. 23	at Navy	
Sept. 30	Marshall	
Oct. 7	UCF	
Oct. 21	SMU	
Oct. 28	at South Florida	
Nov. 4	at Tulane	
Nov. 10	Temple	
Nov. 18	at East Carolina	
Nov. 25	Connecticut	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 1-7 AAC

Sept. 1	UT Martin	W	28-7
Sept. 10	at Purdue	W	38-20
Sept. 15	Houston	L	16-40
Sept. 24	Miami (Ohio)	W	27-20
Oct. 1	South Florida	L	20-45
Oct. 8	at Connecticut	L	9-20
Oct. 22	East Carolina	W	31-19
Oct. 29	at Temple	L	13-34
Nov. 5	BYU	L	3-20
Nov. 12	at UCF	L	3-24
Nov. 18	Memphis	L	7-34
Nov. 25	at Tulsa	(ot) L	37-40

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. R.J. Potts, LB, Indianapolis, IN
2. Michael Warren II, RB, Toledo, OH
3. Jarell White, DB, Cincinnati, OH
4. Ben Hutch, DT, Nashville, TN
5. Jaelen Greene, RB, Atlanta, GA
6. Marquese Taylor, DB, Atlanta, GA
7. Trent Cloud, WR, Cleveland, OH
8. Kyle Bolden, LB, Cincinnati, OH
9. Noah Hamlin, DB, Pittsburgh, PA
10. Javan Hayes, WR, Tyrone, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.3 ppg	11	123
Rushing	118.2 ypg	11	117
Passing	255.9 ypg	6	44
Total	374.1 ypg	9	9

DEFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.9 ppg	4	55
Rushing	189.6 ypg	8	75
Passing	233.3 ypg	6	74
Total	422.8 ypg	6	72

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
+1	+0.08	7	54

STAT CORNER

5.3

Cincinnati had averaged at least 6.2 yards per play every year from 2012-15. In 2016, the Bearcats averaged just 5.3, 99th in FBS.

OFFENSE New head coach Luke Fickell also brings an entirely new staff, including former Notre Dame associate head coach Mike Denbrock as offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach. Offense usually was not a problem under former head coach Tommy Tuberville. Then came an awful 2016, when UC often could not score to save its life. Problems included a revolving door at quarterback, an anemic rushing attack and a passing game that averaged 100-plus fewer yards per game than in 2015.

Senior running back Mike Boone joins two returning starters on the offensive line. After rushing for 749 yards and nine touchdowns in 2015, Boone ran for only 388 yards and two TDs last year as he battled a foot injury.

At quarterback, Gunner Kiel is gone after playing sparingly as a senior. That leaves junior Hayden Moore and sophomore Ross Trail, who both started multiple games last year. Moore finished 2016 as the starter and has the most experience. The wild card is Ohio State transfer Torrance Gibson, a former five-star recruit and high school QB who was moved to wide receiver at OSU.

At wide receiver, top returnees are Devin Gray and Kahlil Lewis. Gray led UC last year with 58 catches and 860 yards receiving. Lewis had 48 catches for 605 yards. Gray and Lewis tied for the team lead with five touchdown catches.

Expect UC to throw more to its tight ends and running backs. The offense is a power spread, and the tempo was much faster during spring practice.

DEFENSE New defensive coordinator Marcus Freeman, a former Ohio State standout linebacker, joins UC after four years as a Purdue assistant. Freeman played under Fickell at OSU between 2004-08, when Fickell was the Buckeyes' co-defensive coordinator/linebackers coach. Freeman inherits a defense that often has struggled in recent years.

Returning starters include junior tackle Cortez Broughton, a second-team All-AAC pick last season. Junior Marquise Copeland did not start last year but led Bearcats defensive linemen in tackles with 59.

Senior Jaylyin Minor has turned heads in the offseason and figures to start at middle linebacker, with sophomore Perry Young at one outside spot. Junior Tyrell Gilbert will be slotted in the hybrid post, covering slot receivers and providing run support.

A big loss is middle linebacker Bryce Jenkinson, who started as a true freshman in 2015. Jenkinson had season-ending knee surgery after two games last year and will not be able to return for the 2017 season.

Returning veterans in the secondary include cornerbacks Linden Stephens, Grant Coleman and Alex Thomas and safety Carter Jacobs.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Andrew Gantz returns after missing most of 2016 with a leg injury. How important is Gantz? In 2015 he set a UC season record for kicking points, with 112. Sam Geraci was to enter his fourth year as punter, but he left the program to pursue an opportunity as a graduate transfer. James Smith, a native of Australia, is expected to step in for Geraci.

FINAL ANALYSIS Tuberville lost the fans last year and resigned shortly after the season ended with a 29–22 record at UC. Enter the 43-year-old Fickell, a fireball of energy in his first full-time college head coaching job. "We don't talk about goals," Fickell says. "For us, they're long term. We want to be the best and be the class of the league, the most fundamentally sound team in America. I haven't sat down and said how many wins or what is a successful season. I don't want to sell ourselves short, or oversell us."



DEVIN GRAY

"The roster is in pretty good shape. They just didn't really have an identity on offense last year. On film, it looked they were trying to do too much."
– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	1	**Kahlil Lewis (Jr.)**	13	Avery Johnson (Sr.)	
WR	85	Thomas Geddis (So.)	88	Marcel Paul (Fr.)	
WR	21	**Devin Gray (Sr.)**	80	Malick Mbodj (Fr.)	
LT	79	**Ryan Stout (Jr.)**	73	Blake Yager (Fr.)	
LG	72	Garrett Campbell (Sr.)	54	Keith Minor (Jr.)	
C	66	David Niehaus (Sr.)	60	Zach Byczynski (Fr.)	
RG	64	Will Steur (Sr.)	78	Morgan James (Jr.)	
RT	71	**Korey Cunningham (Sr.)**	52	Reed Armagost (So.)	
TE	18	Tyler Cogswell (Sr.)	83	Josiah Deguara (So.)	
QB	8	**Hayden Moore (Jr.)**	12	Ross Trail (So.)	
RB	5	Mike Boone (Sr.)	32	Gerrid Doaks (Fr.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	48	Kevin Mouhon (Jr.)	98	Lyndon Johnson (Sr.)	
DT	96	**Cortez Broughton (Jr.)**	92	Curtis Brooks (Fr.)	
DT	44	Marquise Copeland (Jr.)	91	Marcus Brown (Fr.)	
DE	51	**Kimoni Fitz (Jr.)**	95	Bryan Wright (So.)	
WLB	46	Perry Young (So.)	41	Joel Dublanko (Fr.)	
MLB	33	Jaylyin Minor (Sr.)	40	Ty Sponseller (Fr.)	
SLB	2	**Tyrell Gilbert (Jr.)**	37	Matthew Draper (So.)	
CB	9	Linden Stephens (Sr.)	13	**Grant Coleman (Sr.)**	
CB	10	**Alex Thomas (Jr.)**	19	Davin Pierce (Sr.)	
S	20	Carter Jacobs (Sr.)	32	James Wiggins (Fr.)	
S	24	Malik Clements (Jr.)	30	Chris Murphy (Jr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	16	Andrew Gantz (Sr.)	KR	5	Mike Boone (Sr.)
P	7	James Smith (Fr.)	PR	1	Kahlil Lewis (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Hayden Moore, 255-146-1,744-7, 11 TDs
Rushing: Mike Boone, 105 att., 388 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Devin Gray, 58 rec., 860 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Marquise Copeland, 59
Sacks: Cortez Broughton, 2.5
Interceptions: Alex Thomas, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Luke Fickell
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 6-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Denbrock
Defensive Coordinator: Marcus Freeman
Cincinnati, OH • Nippert Stadium (35,000)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

CONNECTICUT HUSKIES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **101** • AAC EAST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	Holy Cross	
Sept. 9	South Florida	
Sept. 16	at Virginia	
Sept. 30	at SMU	
Oct. 6	Memphis	
Oct. 14	at Temple	
Oct. 21	Tulsa	
Oct. 28	Missouri	
Nov. 4	East Carolina	
Nov. 11	at UCF	
Nov. 18	vs. Boston College #	
Nov. 25	at Cincinnati	

#Boston, MA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 1-7 AAC

Sept. 1	Maine	W	24-21
Sept. 10	at Navy	L	24-28
Sept. 17	Virginia	W	13-10
Sept. 24	Syracuse	L	24-31
Sept. 29	at Houston	L	14-42
Oct. 8	Cincinnati	W	20-9
Oct. 15	at South Florida	L	27-42
Oct. 22	UCF	L	16-24
Oct. 29	at East Carolina	L	3-41
Nov. 4	Temple	L	0-21
Nov. 19	at Boston College	L	0-30
Nov. 26	Tulane	L	13-38

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Ian Swenson, S, Evanston, IL
2. Robert Holmes, OL, West Palm Beach, FL
3. Caleb Thomas, NT, Mansfield TX
4. Omar Fortt, DB, New Canaan, CT
5. Marvin Washington, QB, Orlando, FL
6. Darrian Beavers, LB, Cincinnati, OH
7. David Pindell, QB, Columbia, MD*
8. T.J. Gardner-Russaw, LB, Windsor, CT
9. Jordan McAfee, QB, Everett, MA
10. Stanley Hubbard, OL, Washington, DC

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	14.8 ppg	12	128
Rushing	117.3 ypg	12	118
Passing	202.7 ypg	10	94
Total	320.0 ypg	12	122
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.1 ppg	6	65
Rushing	146.1 ypg	3	41
Passing	264.7 ypg	11	107
Total	410.8 ypg	5	65
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.67	11	114

STAT CORNER

3.5

UConn couldn't convert the rare scoring chances it got: The Huskies averaged 3.5 points per trip inside the 40, 127th in FBS.

OFFENSE Pace. Tempo. Speed. These are all words you will hear thrown around for this year's Huskies offense, which by all measures was slow and ineffective last season under former coach Bob Diaco. For the most part, the nation's 122nd-ranked offense, which also ranked dead last in scoring at only 14.8 points per game, was the main culprit behind last season's disappointing 3–9 mark. It will be up to new (and, technically, old) coach Randy Edsall and offensive coordinator Rhett Lashlee to pick things back up. Lashlee took a pay cut to come to Storrs from Auburn, where he ran Gus Malzahn's no-huddle offense to increasing success over the course of last season.

Whether or not the Huskies have the requisite personnel to execute Lashlee's offense in the first year is up for debate. The quarterback competition encountered a setback in spring practice when sophomore Donovan Williams suffered a knee injury. He is expected to be ready for preseason camp, but senior Bryant Shirreffs, who started the first nine games last year, looks like he will begin the season at the top of the depth chart. Don't rule out junior college transfer David Pindell, who has an outside shot at winning the job.

The offensive line has some experience, while running back Arkeel Newsome is a multi-purpose weapon. Lashlee will look to incorporate receivers Hergy Mayala and Tyraiq Beals more into the offense.

DEFENSE Although it did not need as much of a facelift as the offense did, the defense is nonetheless getting a wholesale change in scheme as well, with new coordinator Billy Crocker. The Huskies are going from a more traditional 4-3 look to a 3-3-5, which tends to be more suited to defend the type of high-powered spread offenses that rule the college landscape. When Crocker was at Villanova, he had great success, giving up an FCS-low 15 points per game last season.

Just like the offense, an injury gave the defense a setback in the spring. E.J. Levenberry suffered a torn ACL and will miss the season. Losing him is a big blow to a linebacker corps that was expected to be possibly the best unit on the team. Even with his loss, the return of Vontae Diggs and Junior Joseph, who finished second and third on the team in tackles last year, respectively, gives the group some punch.

There is plenty of experience up front, as Luke Carrezola at defensive end led the team with 11 tackles for a loss last year, and fellow end Cole Ormsby tied for the lead in sacks with four. Losing NFL Combine stud Obi Melifonwu, last year's leading tackler at safety, hurts, but Jamar Summers will lead the secondary from either cornerback or safety, both of which he can hold down effectively.

SPECIALISTS There is plenty of uncertainty here, as both the kicker and punter are gone. Newsome returns as a speedy option at kick returner, and there are plenty of other options there. Brice McAllister and Beals are two of them, and either one can be effective.

FINAL ANALYSIS Any rays of hope the program showed under Diaco at first were wiped away by an ugly 2016. By going back to Edsall, who saw UConn through the transition from the Division I-AA level to an FBS independent to a member of the Big East, the Huskies are hoping to return to their winning ways.

Although there is a decent amount of experience returning, the AAC has grown into perhaps the best Group of 5 conference, and inching up that ladder will be difficult. There's no way the offense can be worse, so marginal steps forward there can at least set the stage for greater improvement down the line.



ARKEEL NEWSOME

"Everyone is saying Randy Edsall is plug and play for UConn to go back to winning seasons, but a lot has changed since he was there."
– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	1	**Hergy Mayala (Jr.)**	23 Keiyon Dixon (Fr.)
WR	2	Tyraiq Beals (Jr.)	8 Aaron McLean (Jr.)
LT	65	**Matt Peart (So.)**	73 Steve Hashemi (Sr.)
LG	62	Tommy Hopkins (Sr.)	79 Kyle Schafenacker (Sr.)
C	63	**Ryan Crozier (Jr.)**	72 Brendan Vechery (Sr.)
RG	72	Brendan Vechery (Sr.)	56 Nino Leone (Fr.)
RT	77	**Trey Rutherford (Sr.)**	73 Steve Hashemi (Sr.)
TE	86	**Alec Bloom (Sr.)**	80 Tommy Myers (Sr.)
HB	34	Teddy Allendinger (So.)	9 Tyler Davis (So.)
QB	4	**Bryant Shirreffs (Sr.)**	15 Donovan Williams (So.)
RB	22	**Arkeel Newsome (Sr.)**	24 Ja'Kevious Vickers (Fr.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	57	**Cole Ormsby (Sr.)**	50 Sheriden Lawley (Jr.)
NG	93	**Folo Fatukasi (Sr.)**	94 Kevin Murphy (So.)
DE	15	**Luke Carrezola (Sr.)**	50 Sheriden Lawley (Jr.)
LB	13	**Vontae Diggs (Sr.)**	35 Luke Sowa (So.)
LB	11	**Junior Joseph (Sr.)**	33 Chris Britton (Jr.)
LB	10	Cameron Stapleton (Sr.)	33 Chris Britton (Jr.)
CB	31	John Robinson IV (So.)	14 Tahj Herring-Wilson (Fr.)
CB	21	**Jamar Summers (Sr.)**	25 Tyler Coyle (Fr.)
CB	1	Tre Bell (Sr.)	25 Tyler Cole (Fr.)
FS	41	Marshe Terry (So.)	32 Aaron Garland (So.)
SS	29	Anthony Watkins (Jr.)	16 Brice McAllister (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	40	Michael Tarbutt (So.)	KR	22	Arkeel Newsome (Sr.)
P	81	Brett Graham (Fr.)	PR	16	Brice McAllister (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Bryant Shirreffs, 283-166-2,010-6, 7 TDs
Rushing: Arkeel Newsome, 147 att., 715 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Arkeel Newsome, 25 rec., 273 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Vontae Diggs, 84
Sacks: Cole Ormsby, 4.0
Interceptions: Jamar Summers, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Randy Edsall
Record at School: 74-70 (12 years)
Career Record: 96-104 (16+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Rhett Lashlee
Defensive Coordinator: Billy Crocker
Storrs, CT • Rentschler Field (40,642)

UConn Athletics

EAST CAROLINA PIRATES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **112** • AAC EAST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	James Madison
Sept. 9	at West Virginia
Sept. 16	Virginia Tech
Sept. 30	South Florida
Oct. 7	Temple
Oct. 14	at UCF
Oct. 21	BYU
Oct. 28	at Houston
Nov. 4	at Connecticut
Nov. 11	Tulane
Nov. 18	Cincinnati
Nov. 25	at Memphis

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 1-7 AAC

Sept. 3	Western Carolina	W	52-7
Sept. 10	NC State	W	33-30
Sept. 17	at South Carolina	L	15-20
Sept. 24	at Virginia Tech	L	17-54
Oct. 1	UCF	L	29-47
Oct. 8	at South Florida	L	22-38
Oct. 22	at Cincinnati	L	19-31
Oct. 29	Connecticut	W	41-3
Nov. 5	at Tulsa	L	24-45
Nov. 12	SMU	L	31-55
Nov. 19	Navy	L	31-66
Nov. 26	at Temple	L	10-37

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Leroy Henley, WR, Pompano Beach, FL
2. Davondre Robinson, DB, Holly Hill, SC
3. Trace Christian, RB, Longwood, FL
4. Tyree Owens, DL, Oviedo, FL*
5. Kingsley Ifedi, QB, Charlotte, NC
6. Jayden Borders, WR, Shelby, NC
7. Taijh Alston, DL, Vass, NC
8. Ben Norris, LB, Charlotte, NC
9. Bruce Bivens, LB, Houston, TX
10. Delvontae Harris, DB, Newnan, GA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.0 ppg	9	75
Rushing	132.4 ypg	10	110
Passing	334.7 ypg	1	6
Total	467.1 ypg	3	23
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	36.1 ppg	11	110
Rushing	228.5 ypg	12	111
Passing	224.3 ypg	5	62
Total	452.8 ypg	9	100
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
-16	-1.33	12	126

STAT CORNER

-13/-8.8

It's probably no coincidence that East Carolina's turnover margin fell by 13 while its field position margin dropped by 8.8 yards per drive.

OFFENSE Despite an offense that was often potent for coach Scottie Montgomery's first East Carolina team, the Pirates still walked the plank in a 3–9 campaign. Junior quarterback Gardner Minshew was set to take over, but Duke graduate transfer Thomas Sirk could win the job in preseason camp.

To enjoy smoother sailing, Montgomery wants to emphasize a potentially potent offensive line and find the running game ECU could never muster last season (10th in the AAC at 132.4 rushing yards per game). It's running back by committee among Devin Anderson, Hussein Howe, Anthony Scott and Derrell Scott, none of whom rushed for more than 384 yards last year.

But Montgomery knows his team, particularly that beat-up defense, needs a balanced offense. Count on the Pirates still doing their best work through the air, where the QB can look to seniors Quay Johnson, Jimmy Williams and Davon Grayson along with promising true freshman Leroy Henley.

Garrett McGihn will make the move from guard to center and will be joined by returning starting tackles Brandon Smith and Messiah Rice up front.

DEFENSE Ouch! That's going to leave a mark. The Pirates were last in the nation in quarterback sacks and last in turnovers forced. They had eight of both, and some teams do that in two games. So enter new defensive line coach Robert Prunty, new secondary coach Brandon Lynch, and a lot of new faces on the depth chart.

ECU is transitioning to a four-man front, and technically they have two starters back plus newcomer Tyree Owens, who originally signed with West Virginia. Senior end Kiante Anderson might be a better fit in this scheme, and there's experience and depth up front. Inside linebacker Jordan Williams, the team leader in tackles, is back, and the hope is that the new base scheme frees him and Ray Tillman to make more plays.

The secondary has experience with Colby Gore and Corey Seargent returning on the corners and the addition of Auburn transfer Tim Irvin. Irvin was spectacular in the spring alongside steady free safety Travon Simmons, who was too often literally the last line of defense last season. Veteran nickel back Bobby Fulp also starts in the new alignment.

SPECIALISTS Sophomore Jake Verity, who hit 1-of-2 field goals last year, will put his best foot forward as kicker and punter. Chris Love averaged 21.2 yards on kickoff returns, but improving play on special teams is a must. The Pirates ranked near the bottom of the league in both kickoff and punt coverage.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Pirates won their first two games, nearly upset South Carolina, and then the ship sank. It was the school's worst season in 12 years, plagued by untimely turnovers, special teams snafus and a porous Pirates defense. The coaching staff attributed some of the issues to an overall lack of depth, and as with any coaching change, there were some players who weren't buying in through the transition.

Now Montgomery has all hands on deck, and he hopes that a new defensive scheme (4-2-5), more experience and a little more depth can shore up that side of the ball a bit. Offensively, Sirk — assuming he wins the job — has big cleats to fill, as does a receiving corps without Zay Jones, the FBS career receptions leader. There's talent, though, and an attack that should be tailored to Sirk's strengths.

Look for the Pirates' prolific passing attack to be just fine, maybe even better if ECU can run the ball, too. There are questions on special teams, but overall Montgomery, who has earned props on the recruiting trail, is feeling goodwill in Greenville.



QUAY JOHNSON

"They need to clean up a lot on both sides of the ball. They turn the ball over a lot, it was easy to rattle them last season."

– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**23**	**Quay Johnson (Sr.)**	1 Deondre Farrier (So.)
WR	**81**	**Jimmy Williams (Sr.)**	84 Leroy Henley (Fr.)
WR	85	Davon Grayson (Sr.)	15 Terrell Green (Jr.)
LT	**78**	**Messiah Rice (Jr.)**	74 Justin Sandifer (Sr.)
LG	75	Sean Bailey (Fr.)	52 Dqmarcus Shaw (Jr.)
C	**55**	**Garrett McGhin (Jr.)**	66 Erik Lenzen (Jr.)
RG	70	Cortez Herrin (So.)	67 D'Ante Smith (So.)
RT	**62**	**Brandon Smith (Sr.)**	79 Dalton Montgomery (So.)
TE	**86**	**Stephen Baggett (Sr.)**	80 Andrew Watley (So.)
QB		Thomas Sirk (Sr.)	5 Gardner Minshew (Jr.)
RB	25	Devin Anderson (Jr.)	28 Hussein Howe (So.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	44	Kendall Futrell (So.)	**10 Yiannis Bowden (Jr.)**
DT	**97**	**Demage Bailey (Sr.)**	93 Jalen Price (So.)
DT	69	Justin Brown (Jr.)	Tyree Owens (Jr.)
DE	96	Kiante Anderson (Sr.)	90 Randall Anderson (Sr.)
LB	7	Jordan Williams (Sr.)	33 Cannon Gibbs (Jr.)
LB	21	Ray Tillman (Sr.)	30 Joe Carter (Jr.)
CB	**26**	**Colby Gore (So.)**	35 Chris Love (Sr.)
CB	5	Corey Seargent (Jr.)	22 Marcus Holton, Jr. (Jr.)
NB	8	Bobby Fulp (Sr.)	14 Travis Phillips (Sr.)
SS	27	Tim Irvin (So.)	37 Trevian Hicks (Sr.)
FS	**3**	**Travon Simmons (Sr.)**	42 Devon Sutton (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Jake Verity (So.)	**KR**	35 Chris Love (Sr.)
P	98	Jake Verity (So.)	**PR**	23 Quay Johnson (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Gardner Minshew, 202-119-1,347-4, 8 TDs
Rushing: Anthony Scott, 79 att., 384 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Quay Johnson, 58 rec., 563 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Jordan Williams, 77
Sacks: Jordan Williams, 1.0; Colby Gore, 1.0
Interceptions: Colby Gore, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Scottie Montgomery
Record at School: 3-9 (1 year)
Career Record: 3-9 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Tony Petersen
Defensive Coordinator: Kenwick Thompson
Greenville, NC • Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium (50,000)

East Carolina Athletics

TEMPLE OWLS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **81** • AAC EAST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-4 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Notre Dame
Sept.	9	Villanova
Sept.	15	Massachusetts
Sept.	21	at South Florida
Sept.	30	Houston
Oct.	7	at East Carolina
Oct.	14	Connecticut
Oct.	21	at Army
Nov.	2	Navy
Nov.	10	at Cincinnati
Nov.	18	UCF
Nov.	25	at Tulsa

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-4, 7-1 AAC

Sept.	2	Army	L	13-28
Sept.	10	Stony Brook	W	38-0
Sept.	17	at Penn State	L	27-34
Sept.	24	Charlotte	W	48-20
Oct.	1	SMU	W	45-20
Oct.	6	at Memphis	L	27-34
Oct.	15	at UCF	W	26-25
Oct.	21	South Florida	W	46-30
Oct.	29	Cincinnati	W	34-13
Nov.	4	at Connecticut	W	21-0
Nov.	19	at Tulane	W	31-0
Nov.	26	East Carolina	W	37-10
Dec.	3	at Navy #	W	34-10
Dec.	27	vs. Wake Forest %	L	26-34

#AAC Championship %Military Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Todd Centeio, QB, West Palm Beach, FL
2. Griffin Sestili, OL, Sewickley, PA
3. Malik Burns, DL, Marbury, MD
4. Arnold Ebiketie, DL, Silver Spring, MD
5. Audley Isaacs, LB, Philadelphia, PA
6. Jeremy Jennings, WR, Downingtown, PA
7. Jadan Blue, WR, Baltimore, MD
8. Collin Washington, DB, Philadelphia, PA
9. Emil Moody, TE, Philadelphia, PA
10. Ifeanyi Maijeh, DL, Rockaway, NY

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.4 ppg	6	43
Rushing	176.1 ypg	5	61
Passing	237.4 ypg	7	63
Total	413.6 ypg	8	66
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	18.4 ppg	1	11
Rushing	130.4 ypg	2	25
Passing	152.1 ypg	1	3
Total	282.5 ypg	1	3
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.43	4	32

STAT CORNER

+1.4

Temple averaged 6.0 yards per play in 2016 and allowed 4.6. That plus-1.4 yard margin ranked 17th in FBS and first in the AAC.

OFFENSE Phillip Walker was the quarterback the last three-plus seasons. Now, there are a handful of promising yet unproven players trying to be next in line, a competition that in a worst-case scenario might take a while to sort out. There's also a new coordinator, Dave Patenaude, who spent the last five years at Coastal Carolina. Expect to see more up-tempo and possibly some option, even if that means utilizing more than one quarterback.

Whoever emerges will have plenty of experienced targets to lean on. Wide receiver looks to be one of the team's strengths. Ventell Bryant, Keith Kirkwood and Adonis Jennings combined for 123 catches, 2,017 yards and 12 touchdowns (four apiece) for a team that had 31 rushing scores. Running back Ryquell Armstead ran for 919 yards (5.9 per carry) and 14 TDs as the No. 2 back. And as is the case at wideout, there's capable depth.

The line suffered some big losses but still returns three starters plus several others who got playing time as backups. There's a good chance Temple will be going with more three-WR sets instead of employing a tight end.

DEFENSE The Owls had one of the nation's top-ranked units a year ago. In their last five wins, they allowed 33 points, which included back-to-back shutouts. New coordinator Taver Johnson (defensive backs coach the last three years at Purdue) has only four starters back. And edge rusher Haason Reddick went from walk-on to high NFL Draft pick.

The line is strong on the inside but lost five players who combined for 27 of the Owls' 41 sacks. The linebackers are young, although the position is deep and promising. As many as seven guys are likely to get on the field.

The secondary returns almost intact, with safety Sean Chandler leading the way. Mike Jones, a graduate transfer from North Carolina Central, is projected to take over the one open cornerback spot.

SPECIALISTS Austin Jones, who set school records in 2015 for field goals (23) and points by a kicker (113), went down in October with a knee injury. Walk-on freshman Aaron Boumerhi took over and made 15-of-17 attempts, including four in the Military Bowl loss to Wake Forest, to make second-team all-conference. It just remains to be seen who wins out.

FINAL ANALYSIS Temple is coming off its best two-year run in program history. Previously, the Owls had won as many as 10 games in a season only once. Now they've done it three times. So what's next? Matt Rhule left for Baylor and was succeeded by his good friend Geoff Collins, who ran Florida's defense the last two seasons. He's the school's fourth straight first-time head coach.

About the only thing the Owls haven't done is finish a season strong. They lost their last two in 2015 and their bowl last year (without Rhule), although they did win a conference title for the first time since 1967.

The Owls aren't going to become irrelevant because Rhule is gone. But some things will be different. The schedule appears more difficult now that Houston, Navy and Tulsa are the cross-division games. And they have to visit East favorite South Florida in their AAC opener. There could be a few growing pains, particularly if the quarterback situation isn't adequately resolved in a timely manner. The non-league slate starts at Notre Dame and later takes the Owls to Army, which won last year's opener in South Philly.

While another double-digit win total is probably asking too much, another bowl game is well within the Owls' reach.



RYQUELL ARMSTEAD

"(Matt) Rhule proved it's possible to win there, but you have a lot working against you. The perception is that Rhule was a unique case."

– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	1	Ventell Bryant (Jr.)	13	Isaiah Wright (So.)
WR	5	**Keith Kirkwood (Sr.)**	14	Brodrick Yancy (Jr.)
WR	17	Adonis Jennings (Sr.)	10	Marshall Ellick (Jr.)
LT	79	Cole Boozer (Sr.)	77	Jaelin Robinson (Jr.)
LG	70	**Jovahn Fair (So.)**	76	Vincent Picozzi (Fr.)
C	58	Matt Hennessy (Fr.)	71	Benson Israel (So.)
RG	69	**Adrian Sullivan (Sr.)**	55	Brian Carter (Sr.)
RT	53	**Leon Johnson (Sr.)**	74	James McHale (Jr.)
QB	12	Logan Marchi (So.)	18	Frankie Nutile (Jr.)
RB	25	Ryquell Armstead (Jr.)	27	Jager Gardner (Jr.)
FB	4	Nick Sharga (Sr.)	45	Rob Ritrovato (Jr.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	9	Jacob Martin (Sr.)	51	Dana Levine (So.)
DT	98	**Michael Dogbe (Jr.)**	99	Freddie Booth-Lloyd (Jr.)
DT	89	Greg Webb (Sr.)	94	Julian Taylor (Sr.)
DE	56	Sharif Finch (Sr.)	93	DeAndre Kelly (So.)
OLB	18	Shaun Bradley (So.)	48	Daishaun Grimes (So.)
ILB	35	William Kwenkeu (So.)	44	Jared Folks (Jr.)
OLB	36	Sam Franklin (So.)	22	Chapelle Russell (So.)
CB	16	**Artrel Foster (Sr.)**	21	Derrek Thomas (Jr.)
CB	10	Mike Jones (Sr.)	33	Cequan Jefferson (Sr.)
FS	3	**Sean Chandler (Sr.)**	28	Jyquis Thomas (Jr.)
SS	23	**Delvon Randall (Jr.)**	32	Benny Walls (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	29	Austin Jones (Sr.)	KR	13	Isaiah Wright (So.)
P	97	Aaron Boumerhi (So.)	PR	3	Sean Chandler (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Logan Marchi, 6-2-29-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Ryquell Armstead, 156 att., 919 yds., 14 TDs
Receiving: Ventell Bryant, 54 rec., 895 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Delvon Randall, 65
Sacks: Jacob Martin, 2.5
Interceptions: Delvon Randall, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Geoff Collins
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Dave Patenaude
Defensive Coordinator: Taver Johnson
Philadelphia, PA • Lincoln Financial Field (69,176)

Joseph V. Labolito

UCF KNIGHTS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **79** • AAC EAST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	FIU	
Sept. 9	Memphis	
Sept. 16	Georgia Tech	
Sept. 23	at Maryland	
Sept. 30	Maine	
Oct. 7	at Cincinnati	
Oct. 14	East Carolina	
Oct. 21	at Navy	
Nov. 4	at SMU	
Nov. 11	Connecticut	
Nov. 18	at Temple	
Nov. 24	South Florida	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 4-4 AAC

Sept. 3	South Carolina State	W	38-0
Sept. 10	at Michigan	L	51-14
Sept. 17	Maryland	(ot) L	30-24
Sept. 24	at FIU	W	53-14
Oct. 1	at East Carolina	W	47-29
Oct. 15	Temple	L	26-25
Oct. 22	at Connecticut	W	24-16
Oct. 29	at Houston	L	31-24
Nov. 5	Tulane	W	37-6
Nov. 12	Cincinnati	W	24-3
Nov. 19	Tulsa	L	35-20
Nov. 26	at South Florida	L	48-31
Dec. 17	vs. Arkansas State #	L	31-13

#Cure Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Cordarrian Richardson, RB, Memphis, TN
2. Emmanuel Greene, WR, Pompano Beach, FL
3. Bentavious Thompson, RB, Miami, FL
4. Marlon Williams, WR, Mobile, AL
5. Sterling Jones, LB, Montgomery, AL
6. Gabriel Luyanda, LB, Tampa, FL*
7. Jeremiah Zio, DE, St. Petersburg, FL
8. Otis Anderson, RB, Jacksonville, FL
9. Darriel Mack Jr., QB, Norfolk, VA
10. Zamari Maxwell, DB, Largo, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.8 ppg	7	66
Rushing	141.2 ypg	9	104
Passing	209.7 ypg	9	89
Total	350.8 ypg	10	113
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.6 ppg	3	42
Rushing	169.5 ypg	5	62
Passing	200.8 ypg	2	28
Total	370.3 ypg	4	39
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	8	58

STAT CORNER

-1.76

UCF allowed 1.76 fewer yards per play in 2016 – by far the biggest improvement in FBS – lowering its average from 6.54 to 4.78.

OFFENSE The "UCFast" offense was largely a work in progress in Scott Frost's first season — although not unexpectedly, as that side of the ball was in full rebuild mode coming off the previous winless season. The good news is that virtually every key player on that side returns. All eyes will be on the quarterback spot and offensive line to show the most improvement, two areas that had their share of struggles in 2016.

Sophomore quarterback McKenzie Milton enters the season as the presumed starter after earning the top job a few games into his rookie season. He's shown to be quick and agile, important traits for a quarterback in Frost's offense, but questions linger about his overall arm strength. True freshman Darriel Mack Jr., who likely enters the season as the backup by default, could challenge Milton for starter status depending on how quickly he can pick up the nuances of the system.

The offensive line took a step back when top blocker Tyler Hudanick was sidelined in mid-October with a season-ending injury. He is expected to return to full strength. One player to watch is Jordan Johnson, who is moving from guard to center.

The Knights have a bevy of skill-position talent, notably junior wide receiver Tre'Quan Smith, the team leader in receptions and yards the past two seasons. Sophomores Jawon Hamilton and Adrian Killins provide a formidable 1-2 punch in the backfield. Killins averaged 6.5 yards per carry in a reserve role last season.

DEFENSE UCF's turnaround from winless to a bowl team last season was due in large part to the consistent play of the defense, a unit headlined by outside linebacker Shaquem Griffin, the American Athletic Conference Defensive Player of the Year. Now a senior, Griffin will try to top the league-leading 11.5 sacks he posted a season ago.

Defensive coordinator Erik Chinander does have holes to fill — all four starters in the secondary and three of four linebackers have graduated. That's a lot of experience to replace as those players comprised seven of the team's top nine leading tacklers. Though inexperienced, UCF does have players waiting in the wings such as cornerbacks Brandon Moore and Rashard Causey, safety Tre Neal and linebackers Nate Evans and Dedrion Bacote. And big things are expected from safety Shawn Burgess-Becker, a highly touted transfer from Alabama.

The defensive line should be a strength with the return of all the key players. Senior nose guard Jamiyus Pittman, the most experienced of the bunch, is considered the leader of the defense. End Trysten Hill, a weight room warrior, has a promising future.

SPECIALISTS Killins has electrifying speed that makes him a home run threat in the return game, evident from his 100-yard kick return for a TD last season against East Carolina. The ever-reliable Caleb Houston has graduated after four seasons at punter, passing the torch to junior Mac Loudermilk. Matt Wright has been a solid performer his first two seasons as UCF's field goal kicker, making 17-of-22 attempts a season ago.

FINAL ANALYSIS Attaining six wins and reaching a bowl game in Frost's first season was a solid starting point — if not a bit ahead of schedule. With questions at several key positions, it's likely too early to start thinking about a conference championship, but another bowl trip should be achievable if the offensive line takes the necessary steps forward and there isn't too big of a drop-off on defense.

UCF will be tested early with a challenging first month that includes a Week 2 date against Memphis and non-conference matchups against Georgia Tech and Maryland.



SHAQUEM GRIFFIN

"Scott Frost is recruiting the hell out of that state and has a head start on the other first-year guys at (USF, Florida Atlantic, FIU)."

– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	4	**Tre'Quan Smith (Jr.)**		Marlon Williams (Fr.)
WR	11	**Cam Stewart (Jr.)**	7	Emmanuel Greene (Fr.)
WR	5	Dredrick Snelson (So.)		Gabriel Davis (Fr.)
LT	66	**Aaron Evans (Sr.)**	77	Jake Brown (So.)
LG	53	Tyler Hudanick (Jr.)	75	Tate Hernly (Sr.)
C	72	**Jordan Johnson (So.)**	70	Luke Palmer (Jr.)
RG	79	Chavis Dickey (Sr.)	74	Boman Swanson (Fr.)
RT	78	**Wyatt Miller (Jr.)**	68	Charles Sprenkel (Sr.)
TE	88	**Jordan Akins (Jr.)**	15	**Jordan Franks (Sr.)**
QB	10	**McKenzie Milton (So.)**		Darriel Mack Jr. (Fr.)
RB	1	**Jawon Hamilton (So.)**	9	Adrian Killins Jr. (So.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	95	**Trysten Hill (So.)**	98	Brendon Hayes (So.)
DT	5	**Jamiyus Pittman (Sr.)**	91	Joey Connors (Jr.)
DE	93	**Tony Guerad (Sr.)**	49	Seyvon Lowry (Sr.)
OLB	18	**Shaquem Griffin (Sr.)**	99	Titus Davis (So.)
ILB	56	Pat Jasinski (Jr.)		Sterling Jones (Fr.)
ILB	44	Nate Evans (So.)	40	Christian Lezzer (Jr.)
OLB	35	Dedrion Bacote (Fr.)		Gabriel Luyanda (Fr.)
CB	30	Rashard Causey (Jr.)	36	Antwan Collier (Fr.)
CB	20	Brandon Moore (So.)	46	Chris Johnson (Sr.)
FS	28	Shawn Burgess-Becker (So.)	25	Kyle Gibson (Jr.)
SS	23	Tre Neal (Jr.)	26	Brandon Scott (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	11	Matthew Wright (Jr.)	KR	9	Adrian Killins Jr. (So.)
P	48	Mac Loudermilk (Jr.)	PR	46	Chris Johnson (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: McKenzie Milton, 336-194-1,983-7, 10 TDs
Rushing: Jawon Hamilton, 139 att., 495 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Tre'Quan Smith, 57 rec., 853 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Shaquem Griffin, 92
Sacks: Shaquem Griffin, 11.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Scott Frost
Record at School: 6-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 6-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Troy Walters
Defensive Coordinator: Erik Chinander
Orlando, FL • Spectrum Stadium (44,206)

UCF Athletics

USF BULLS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **24** • AAC EAST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **12-1, 7-1 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26	at San Jose State	
Sept. 2	Stony Brook	
Sept. 9	at Connecticut	
Sept. 15	Illinois	
Sept. 21	Temple	
Sept. 30	at East Carolina	
Oct. 14	Massachusetts	
Oct. 21	at Tulane	
Oct. 28	Cincinnati	
Nov. 4	Houston	
Nov. 18	Tulsa	
Nov. 24	at UCF	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-2, 7-1 AAC

Sept. 3	Towson	W	56-20
Sept. 10	Northern Illinois	W	48-17
Sept. 17	at Syracuse	W	45-20
Sept. 24	Florida State	L	35-55
Oct. 1	at Cincinnati	W	45-20
Oct. 8	East Carolina	W	38-22
Oct. 15	Connecticut	W	42-27
Oct. 21	at Temple	L	30-46
Oct. 28	Navy	W	52-45
Nov. 12	at Memphis	W	49-42
Nov. 19	at SMU	W	35-27
Nov. 26	UCF	W	48-31
Dec. 29	vs. S. Carolina # (ot)	W	46-39

#Birmingham Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Naytron Culpepper, DB, Miami, FL
2. Kevaughn Dingle, WR, Miami, FL
3. Jean Marcellus, OL, Tampa, FL
4. Nick Roberts, DB, Orange Park, FL
5. Jabreel Stephens, DL, Seffner, FL
6. Bentlee Sanders, DB, Tampa, FL
7. Jernard Phillips, WR, Miami, FL
8. Demetris Harris, OL, Jacksonville, FL
9. Randall St. Felix, WR, Miami, FL
10. Darrien Grant, DL, Bradenton, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	43.8 ppg	1	4
Rushing	285.3 ypg	2	5
Passing	226.2 ypg	8	70
Total	511.5 ypg	2	11
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.6 ppg	10	92
Rushing	196.5 ypg	9	84
Passing	285.5 ypg	12	122
Total	482.0 ypg	12	120
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+9	+0.69	2	14

STAT CORNER

8.1

USF averaged 8.1 yards per play on first down, second in FBS. Of course, the Bulls also allowed 6.5 per first down play, 104th.

AP

OFFENSE Senior quarterback Quinton Flowers, a poor man's Lamar Jackson, should get some Heisman Trophy support if he continues on his upward trajectory. Last season, Flowers was the American Athletic Conference's Offensive Player of the Year when he rushed for 1,530 yards, the fourth-highest total ever by a FBS quarterback, and 18 touchdowns.

"Quinton will only build on what he did last season," says first-year South Florida coach Charlie Strong, who promises an up-tempo offensive style that suits Flowers' strengths. "He's hungry to get better and he's providing a ton of leadership out there."

Flowers became a much-improved passer last season (62.5 completion percentage, 24 touchdowns, just seven interceptions), and part of the reason is a deep, talented receiving corps. Junior Tyre McCants, who had 25 catches, and senior Marquez Valdes-Scantling (22 catches) provide speedy options. Sophomore Darnell Salomon has the potential to blossom after limited duty last year. Also look for the big-play tight ends — sophomore Mitchell Wilcox and junior Elkanah Dillon, who combined for a 22.8-yard receiving average on 20 catches — to offer a diversion.

The backfield took a hit when Marlon Mack, a three-time first-team All-AAC running back who had three 1,000-yard rushing seasons and a South Florida career record of 3,609 yards, skipped his senior season for the NFL Draft. But Strong expressed confidence in the returning backs, particularly do-everything senior D'Ernest Johnson, who rushed for 543 yards and had 28 receptions while being the team's best return man and scoring 14 total touchdowns.

Two starters must be replaced on the offensive line, where center Cameron Ruff and guard Jeremi Hall are expected to be the anchors.

DEFENSE The Bulls return seven of their top nine tacklers from a defense that struggled in 2016, ranking 120th nationally with 482.0 yards allowed per game. Overall, the tackling was horrendous. Brian Jean-Mary, the new defensive coordinator, says he will employ multiple looks, including a 3-3-5 alignment, which will utilize one deep free safety and a strong safety closer to the box. The secondary is stocked with experience, including cornerback Deatrick Nichols, a big-play senior who has 27 career starts. The Bulls' defensive line also has experience but as a group did not get enough pressure on the quarterback last season.

Middle linebacker Auggie Sanchez, who ranks second nationally in career tackles among active players (303), is the leader who calls alignments and audibles. He will adjust to his fourth defensive coordinator in as many seasons.

SPECIALISTS With the Bulls scoring a program-record 77 TDs, some pressure was relieved from junior placekicker Emilio Nadelman, who made all seven of his field goal attempts. Senior punter Jonathan Hernandez developed into a formidable weapon with a 41.2-yard average, 25 punts downed inside the 20-yard line and 13 that surpassed 50 yards. Johnson led the league with a 11.8-yard average on punt returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Fired from Texas, Strong quickly landed at South Florida after Willie Taggart bolted for Oregon. The Bulls, 11–2 last season and returning 16 starters, could be favored to win all of their games. Coming off the school's first-ever season-ending top-20 national ranking and seeking the first league title in the program's history, they are a consensus pick to capture the AAC championship.

"I see no ceiling on what this program can accomplish," Strong says.

If South Florida reaches its potential, lifts a conference-title trophy and plays in a major bowl game, it will have soared to heights that seemed unimaginable just a few seasons ago.



QUINTON FLOWERS

"They have real athletes in that program, and they can get them, but the school has to step up and look at UCF's level of commitment."
– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	8	**Tyre McCants (Jr.)**	81	Ryeshene Bronson (Sr.)	
WR	1	Chris Barr (Jr.)		Kevaughn Dingle (Fr.)	
WR	11	**M. Valdes-Scantling (Sr.)**	3	Darnell Salomon (So.)	
LT	55	Eric Mayes (Jr.)	78	Billy Atterbury (So.)	
LG	73	**Jeremi Hall (Sr.)**	70	Glen Bethel (Sr.)	
C	74	**Cameron Ruff (Sr.)**	68	Michael Galati (Jr.)	
RG	72	Brooks Larkin (So.)	52	Michael Wiggs (Fr.)	
RT	77	**Marcus Norman (So.)**	79	Grant Polk (So.)	
TE	89	**Mitchell Wilcox (So.)**	85	Elkanah Dillon (Jr.)	
QB	9	**Quinton Flowers (Sr.)**	7	Brett Kean (So.)	
RB	2	D'Ernest Johnson (Sr.)	13	Darius Tice (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (9)

DE	94	**Kirk Livingstone (So.)**	56	Juwuan Brown (Jr.)
DT	10	**Deadrin Senat (Sr.)**	95	Marlon Gonzalez (So.)
DT	60	**Bruce Hector (Sr.)**	99	Kevin Bronson (Jr.)
DE	98	**Mike Love (Sr.)**	15	Vincent Jackson (Jr.)
MLB	43	**Auggie Sanchez (Sr.)**	53	Danny Thomas (Jr.)
WLB	54	Nico Sawtelle (So.)	12	Andre Polk (Fr.)
CB	3	**Deatrick Nichols (Sr.)**	14	Mike Hampton (Fr.)
CB	19	**Ronnie Hoggins (Jr.)**	23	Mazzi Wilkins (Jr.)
S	21	**Khalid McGee (Jr.)**	37	Nate Ferguson (Jr.)
S	20	Devin Abraham (Sr.)	26	Craig Watts (Fr.)
S	13	**Tajee Fullwood (Sr.)**	18	Jaymon Thomas (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	35	Emilio Nadelman (Sr.)	KR	2	D'Ernest Johnson (Sr.)
P	44	Jonathan Hernandez (Sr.)	PR	2	D'Ernest Johnson (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Quinton Flowers, 331-207-2,812-7, 24 TDs
Rushing: Quinton Flowers, 198 att., 1,530 yds., 18 TDs
Receiving: D'Ernest Johnson, 28 rec., 293 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Auggie Sanchez, 120
Sacks: Bruce Hector, 6.0; Auggie Sanchez, 6.0
Interceptions: Deatrick Nichols, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Charlie Strong
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 53-37 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Sterlin Gilbert
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Jean-Mary
Tampa, FL • Raymond James Stadium (65,890)

HOUSTON COUGARS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **59** • AAC WEST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at UTSA
Sept.	9	at Arizona
Sept.	16	Rice
Sept.	23	Texas Tech
Sept.	30	at Temple
Oct.	7	SMU
Oct.	14	at Tulsa
Oct.	19	Memphis
Oct.	28	East Carolina
Nov.	4	at South Florida
Nov.	18	at Tulane
Nov.	24	Navy

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 5-3 AAC

Sept.	3	Oklahoma #	W	33-23
Sept.	10	Lamar	W	42-0
Sept.	15	at Cincinnati	W	40-16
Sept.	24	at Texas State	W	64-3
Sept.	29	Connecticut	W	42-14
Oct.	8	at Navy	L	40-46
Oct.	15	Tulsa	W	38-31
Oct.	22	at SMU	L	16-38
Oct.	29	UCF	W	31-24
Nov.	12	Tulane	W	30-18
Nov.	17	Louisville	W	36-10
Nov.	25	at Memphis	L	44-48
Dec.	17	vs. San Diego State %	L	10-34

#NRG Stadium %Las Vegas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Bryan Jones, DL, Baton Rouge, LA
2. Amaud Willis-Dalton, LB, Cypress, TX
3. Jeremy Singleton, WR, New Orleans, LA
4. Noah Jones, DL, Lancaster, TX
5. Dennis Bardwell, OL, Huffman, TX
6. Derek Parish, LB, Pearland, TX
7. David Anenih, LB, Arlington, TX
8. Bryson Smith, QB, Tyler, TX
9. Alexander Duke, DL, Bellaire, TX
10. Parker Eichenberger, TE, Katy, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.8 ppg	5	26
Rushing	147.1 ypg	8	99
Passing	296.3 ypg	3	17
Total	443.4 ypg	5	41
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	23.5 ppg	2	30
Rushing	100.2 ypg	1	4
Passing	219.5 ypg	4	51
Total	319.6 ypg	2	13
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.54	10	107

STAT CORNER

30.8/27.1

Houston allowed five-plus yards on 30.8 percent of carries (third in FBS) and stuffed 27.1 percent of carries at or behind the line (fourth).

OFFENSE Kyle Allen, a Texas A&M transfer and formerly the nation's top prep quarterback recruit, sat out last season and now is the heir apparent to Greg Ward Jr. Gone is Ward's improvisation that made him one of the nation's most electrifying dual-threat quarterbacks, replaced by the strong-armed Allen, who should allow Houston to return to a more traditional passing offense. D'Eriq King, who missed the spring while recovering from a knee injury, is the likely candidate to serve as the backup.

First-year coach Major Applewhite was able to lure Brian Johnson from Mississippi State to serve as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach.

With Ward, the Cougars were able to rely on his ability to run to mask some of the deficiencies in the running game. Duke Catalon's 528 yards were the fewest for the team's leading rusher since 1993. Catalon was limited to seven starts because of an ankle injury and concussion, and there is concern whether he can remain healthy for an entire season. Walk-on Dillon Birden was a bright spot, starting four games and finishing second on the team with six rushing touchdowns. But after those two, the Cougars need to find some depth.

Linell Bonner is coming off a breakout season with 98 catches for 1,118 yards and three touchdowns and should again be the top receiving target. Steven Dunbar (53 catches, 692 yards) gives the Cougars a solid No. 2, and John Leday had a strong spring. Kyle Postma is expected to move full-time from quarterback to receiver for his final season.

All five starters, led by center Will Noble, return from an offensive line that struggled through injuries and inconsistency. The Cougars' 3.4-yards per carry average was their worst in 12 years.

DEFENSE With new coordinator Mark D'Onofrio, the Cougars promise to keep the same 3-4 base that features multiple fronts and attacking style that has made them one of the nation's best at stopping the run and forcing turnovers in recent years.

All eyes will be on what defensive tackle Ed Oliver does for an encore. The former five-star recruit earned Freshman All-America honors after recording 23 tackles for a loss and five sacks.

The biggest holes to fill come at linebacker, where Houston must replace Steven Taylor and Tyus Bowser, who combined for 24 tackles for a loss and 17 sacks. D'Juan Hines is the frontrunner for Taylor's inside spot, and Emeke Egbule is the top candidate to replace Bowser at edge rusher.

For the second straight year Houston was hit hard by losses in the secondary with the departure of cornerbacks Brandon Wilson (graduation) and Howard Wilson (NFL Draft). Terrell Williams has moved into the nickel corner spot, leaving Jeremy Winchester, Javian Smith, Ka'Darian Smith and former wide receiver Isaiah Johnson competing for the two corner spots.

SPECIALISTS Dane Roy, a 28-year-old former ice cream salesman from Australia, averaged 40.6 yards on punts in his first season. Houston signed Dalton Witherspoon out of the junior college ranks to compete with Joel Scarbrough for the kicking job.

FINAL ANALYSIS For two years the Houston program conducted business under constant speculation over the future of Tom Herman, who became the school's third coach in the last nine years to leave for a more high-profile job. Applewhite, Herman's offensive coordinator, signed a five-year deal with the hopes that he can keep the Cougars relevant on the national scene.



ED OLIVER

"Everyone's talking about Houston being easier or less effective because Tom Herman left for Texas, but he's leaving them stocked with talent."
– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	15	**Linell Bonner (Sr.)**	9	Courtney Lark (So.)
WR	88	**Steven Dunbar (Sr.)**	85	John Leday (Sr.)
WR	18	Keith Corbin (So.)	17	Terry Mark (So.)
LT	74	**Josh Jones (So.)**	62	Jarrid Williams (So.)
LG	72	Mason Denley (Jr.)	76	Kameron Eloph (Jr.)
C	69	**Will Noble (Jr.)**	61	Ryan Deshotel (So.)
RG	73	**Marcus Oliver (Sr.)**	53	Alex Fontana (Sr.)
RT	52	**Braylon Jones (So.)**	51	**Na'Ty Rodgers (Sr.)**
TE	82	Romello Brooker (Jr.)	87	Alex Leslie (Sr.)
QB	10	Kyle Allen (Jr.)	4	D'Eriq King (So.)
RB	2	**Duke Catalon (Jr.)**	25	Dillon Birden (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	91	Nick Thurman (Sr.)		Bryan Jones (Fr.)
DT	10	**Ed Oliver (So.)**	50	Aymiel Fleming (So.)
DE	52	**Jerard Carter (Jr.)**	90	Zach Vaughan (Jr.)
OLB	8	Emeke Egbule (Jr.)	21	Ralph Harvey Jr. (Sr.)
ILB	9	**Matthew Adams (Sr.)**	46	Jordan Milburn (So.)
ILB	12	D'Juan Hines (Sr.)	36	Nomluis Fruge (Sr.)
OLB	22	Austin Robinson (Sr.)	43	Leroy Godfrey (So.)
CB	24	**Jeremy Winchester (Jr.)**	16	Ka'Darian Smith (So.)
CB	19	Javian Smith (So.)	14	Isaiah Johnson (Jr.)
S	1	**Garrett Davis (Jr.)**	23	Terrell Williams (Sr.)
S	2	**Khalil Williams (Sr.)**	5	Collin Wilder (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	47	Dalton Witherspoon (So.)	KR	25	Dillon Birden (Sr.)
P	38	Dane Roy (So.)	PR	5	Collin Wilder (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kyle Postma, 46-29-210-2, 0 TDs
Rushing: Duke Catalon, 145 att., 528 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Linell Bonner, 98 rec., 1,118 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Matthew Adams, 82
Sacks: Ed Oliver, 5.0
Interceptions: None

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Major Applewhite
Record at School: 0-1
Career Record: 0-1
Offensive Coordinator: Brian Johnson
Defensive Coordinators: Mark D'Onofrio, Clay Jennings
Houston, TX • TDECU Stadium (40,000)

University of Houston Athletics

MEMPHIS TIGERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **51** • AAC WEST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-4, 6-2 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	UL Monroe
Sept.	9	at UCF
Sept.	16	UCLA
Sept.	23	Southern Illinois
Sept.	30	at Georgia State
Oct.	6	at Connecticut
Oct.	14	Navy
Oct.	19	at Houston
Oct.	27	Tulane
Nov.	3	at Tulsa
Nov.	18	SMU
Nov.	25	East Carolina

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 AAC

Sept.	3	SE Missouri State	W	35-17
Sept.	17	Kansas	W	43-7
Sept.	24	Bowling Green	W	77-3
Oct.	1	at Ole Miss	L	28-48
Oct.	6	Temple	W	34-27
Oct.	14	at Tulane	W	24-14
Oct.	22	at Navy	L	28-42
Oct.	29	Tulsa	L	30-59
Nov.	5	at SMU	W	51-7
Nov.	12	South Florida	L	42-49
Nov.	18	at Cincinnati	W	34-7
Nov.	25	Houston	W	48-44
Dec.	20	vs. WKU #	L	31-51

#Boca Raton Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Obinna Eze, OL, Nashville, TN
2. Nick Robinson, WR, Oklahoma City, OK
3. Terrell Carter, CB, Nashville, TN
4. Quindon Lewis, DB, Moore, OK
5. J.J. Russell, LB, Grenada, MS
6. Cade Mashburn, LB, Norman, OK
7. Tito Windham, DB, Gulfport, MS*
8. Mikhail Hill, OL, Harvey, LA
9. Marcus Green, DB, Cedar Hill, TX*
10. Zay Cullens, DB, Ecru, MS

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.8 ppg	3	15
Rushing	159.3 ypg	7	84
Passing	304.4 ypg	2	14
Total	463.7 ypg	4	28
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.8 ppg	7	68
Rushing	204.9 ypg	10	93
Passing	249.7 ypg	8	89
Total	454.6 ypg	11	106
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+8	+0.62	3	18

STAT CORNER

+5.1

Memphis' field position margin was plus-5.1 yards per drive. The Tigers' special teams units were among the best in the country.

OFFENSE In his first season as a head coach, Mike Norvell directed Memphis to its third straight bowl game. Riley Ferguson is back for his senior season after passing for 3,698 yards and 32 touchdowns after transferring from junior college.

Those numbers could improve as the Tigers return eight starters on offense, including one of the league's top receivers — Anthony Miller, who came to the program as a walk-on and set the school record with 1,434 receiving yards in 2016. Miller will be joined by another reliable former walk-on in Phil Mayhue, a senior who was the team's second-leading receiver. Mayhue averaged 16.1 yards per catch.

The running back position, headlined by senior Doroland Dorceus, will be deep. If Dorceus matches last season's total (810 yards), he'll finish as the program's second-leading rusher behind DeAngelo Williams. Patrick Taylor, a powerful runner who averaged 5.9 per carry, and Darrell Henderson, the fastest player on the team, will get plenty of carries. Tony Pollard is a weapon both rushing and receiving.

The offensive line will be bolstered by Harneet Gill, a former Missouri signee who is expected to take over at left tackle. Trevon Tate, last year's left tackle, will move to the right side. The interior positions will be manned by returning starters.

DEFENSE Coordinator Chris Ball has reduced the defensive package to allow his unit to play fast. The Tigers ranked in the bottom half nationally in several categories, including sacks and tackles for a loss, and Ball would like to correct the shortcomings.

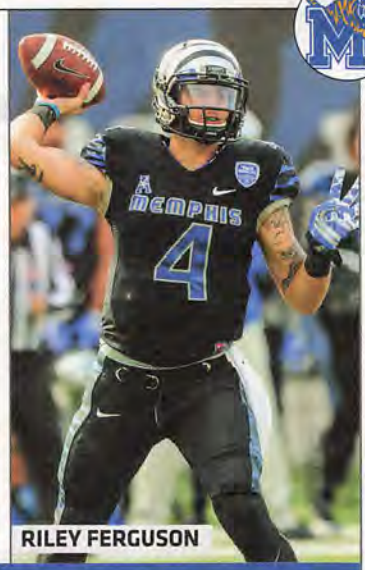
Improved play up front would be a start. Only 11 of the team's 23 sacks in 2016 came from the defensive line. Linebacker will be the team's strength, and Jackson Dillon's return is among the reasons why. Dillon, who will play the hybrid outside linebacker/end position, played only eight snaps last season due to injury. Curtis Akins, at middle linebacker, was forced into the starting lineup in mid-October and blossomed. Genard Avery, at the other linebacker spot, will be one of the league's best after leading the team with 11 tackles for a loss and five sacks.

Ball's emphasis will be on finding replacements for six of his top eight defensive backs. Two former Oklahoma players — cornerbacks Tito Windham and Marcus Green — are poised to contribute. Although he's only 5'9", Windham is a punishing tackler who took first-team reps in the spring. Green is rangy and athletic and has the size (6'2", 190) to match up against the elite wideouts in the AAC. Safety Jonathan Cook, an ex-Alabama player, had 88 tackles to lead the team.

SPECIALISTS Memphis must replace Jake Elliott, one of the most successful kickers in the program's history. Riley Patterson, rated among the nation's top 10 kickers by 247Sports, is next in line. After going 20 years without returning a kickoff for a touchdown, the Tigers returned three in 2016 — two by Pollard, one of the nation's best.

FINAL ANALYSIS Norvell picked up where Justin Fuente — who guided the Tigers to back-to-back bowl games before departing for Virginia Tech — left off. Memphis ranked 14th nationally in passing offense (304.4 ypg), 15th in scoring offense (38.8 ppg) and 28th in total offense (463.7 ypg) and played in a third straight bowl game.

The Tigers should set a school record by playing in a fourth straight postseason game as Norvell returns eight starters on offense with multiple weapons at running back and receiver. The defense will be a question mark, particularly with an overhaul in the secondary. But keep this in mind: Memphis won 17 games over the past two years with a defense that ranked in the bottom half of the AAC.



RILEY FERGUSON

"If there's a sleeper program in this conference, I think these guys are it. Riley Ferguson in that offense will be really good."

– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	3	**Anthony Miller (Sr.)**	9	John Williams (So.)
WR	89	**Phil Mayhue (Sr.)**	10	Damonte Coxie (Fr.)
WR	11	Sam Craft (Sr.)	18	Roderick Proctor (Sr.)
LT	70	Harneet Gill (Jr.)		Tanis Joseph (Jr.)
LG	53	**Dustin Woodard (So.)**		Mikhail Hill (Fr.)
C	54	**Drew Kyser (Jr.)**	75	Tauvaga Ho Ching II (So.)
RG	71	**Gabe Kuhn (Sr.)**	50	Lio Lafaele (Sr.)
RT	72	**Trevon Tate (Jr.)**	51	Jace Neville (Jr.)
QB	4	**Riley Ferguson (Sr.)**	2	David Moore (Fr.)
TB	28	Doroland Dorceus (Sr.)	8	Darrell Henderson (So.)
RB	1	**Tony Pollard (So.)**	6	Patrick Taylor Jr. (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	48	**Ernest Suttles (Sr.)**	96	Khalil Johnson (So.)
DT	38	**Jonathan Wilson (So)**	15	Christian Johnson (Sr.)
NT	97	Emmanuel Cooper (Jr.)	98	Jared Gentry (Jr.)
KAT	34	Jackson Dillon (Sr.)	55	Bryce Huff (So.)
LB	7	**Curtis Akins (Jr.)**	30	Shareef White (Sr.)
LB	6	**Genard Avery (Sr.)**	29	Darian Porter (Sr.)
STAR	25	**Austin Hall (So.)**	40	Thomas Pickens (Fr.)
CB	39	Christian Slaughter (Sr.)	3	Marcus Green (Jr.)
CB	24	Tito Windham (Jr.)		T.J. Carter (Fr.)
S	19	Shaun Rupert (Sr.)	41	Sanchez Blake Jr. (Fr.)
S	14	**Jonathan Cook (Sr.)**	4	Josh Perry (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Riley Patterson (Fr.)	KR	1 Tony Pollard (So.)
P	17	Spencer Smith (Sr.)	PR	3 Anthony Miller (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Riley Ferguson, 443-280-3,698-10, 32 TDs
Rushing: Doroland Dorceus, 132 att., 810 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Anthony Miller, 95 rec., 1,434 yds., 14 TDs
Tackles: Jonathan Cook, 88
Sacks: Genard Avery, 5.0
Interceptions: Genard Avery, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Norvell
Record at School: 8-5 (1 year)
Career Record: 8-5 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Darrell Dickey
Defensive Coordinator: Chris Ball
Memphis, TN • Liberty Bowl (59,308)

Memphis Athletics

NAVY MIDSHIPMEN

NATIONAL FORECAST: **56** • AAC WEST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 5-3 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Florida Atlantic	
Sept. 9	Tulane	
Sept. 23	Cincinnati	
Sept. 30	at Tulsa	
Oct. 7	Air Force	
Oct. 14	at Memphis	
Oct. 21	UCF	
Nov. 2	at Temple	
Nov. 11	SMU	
Nov. 18	at Notre Dame	
Nov. 24	at Houston	
Dec. 9	vs. Army #	#Philadelphia, PA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-5, 7-1 AAC

Sept. 3	Fordham	W	52-16
Sept. 10	Connecticut	W	28-24
Sept. 17	at Tulane	W	21-14
Oct. 1	at Air Force	L	14-28
Oct. 8	Houston	W	46-40
Oct. 22	Memphis	W	42-28
Oct. 28	South Florida	L	45-52
Nov. 5	vs. Notre Dame #	W	28-27
Nov. 12	Tulsa	W	42-40
Nov. 19	at East Carolina	W	66-31
Nov. 26	at SMU	W	75-31
Dec. 3	Temple %	L	10-34
Dec. 10	vs. Army $	L	17-21
Dec. 23	vs. Louisiana Tech &	L	45-48

#Jacksonville %AAC Championship
$Baltimore &Armed Forces Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Austin Talbert-Loving, DB, Bowie, MD
2. Billy Honaker, OL, Schertz, TX
3. Tyreek King-El, SB, Atlanta, GA
4. Markell Clark, DL, Hoover, AL
5. Dean Sise, LB, Kirkland, WA
6. Alema Kapoi, DL, Honolulu, HI
7. Mike Flowers, DL, Hermitage, TN
8. Nick Novak, OL, Oxford, MI
9. Peter Nestrowitz, OL, Paramus, NJ
10. Dalen Morris, QB, Huntsville, AL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	37.9 ppg	4	20
Rushing	310.1 ypg	1	4
Passing	128.1 ypg	11	125
Total	438.3 ypg	6	46
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.0 ppg	9	84
Rushing	179.9 ypg	7	71
Passing	254.1 ypg	10	100
Total	434.0 ypg	8	84
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.14	6	52

STAT CORNER

5.8

Navy's average distance to go on third down was 5.8 yards, third lowest in the country. Option efficiency pays off.

OFFENSE Zach Abey takes the reins of Navy's patented triple-option, and there figure to be some growing pains along the way. Abey is the least experienced starting quarterback the Mids have opened a season with since 2012. He was thrust into the spotlight after season-long starter Will Worth went down with a broken foot in the AAC Championship Game. Abey made his first career start in the Army-Navy game and struggled mightily. The 6'2", 212-pound junior performed much better in the Armed Forces Bowl, rushing for 114 yards and passing for another 159.

Navy does have a proven veteran at fullback, always the first option in the offense. Chris High started eight games a year ago and finished second on the team in rushing with 546 yards. The powerfully built 224-pounder figures to be a workhorse this season. Darryl Bonner became a big-play threat in 2016, averaging almost 13 yards per touch. The 5'7", 178-pound speedster was the team's second-leading receiver with 10 catches for 278 yards and added 227 rushing yards on 29 carries.

Navy must find a go-to wide receiver to replace Jamir Tillman, who concluded his prolific career with 91 catches for 1,626 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Right guard Evan Martin graded out as Navy's best offensive lineman last season and leads a unit that will feature three other veterans (left guard Robert Lindsey, center Parker Wade, right tackle Andrew Wood) who have started.

DEFENSE Inside linebacker Micah Thomas spearheads a unit that returns six starters, including seven of the eight top tacklers. Navy's 3-4 defensive alignment requires the inside linebackers to make the majority of stops, and Thomas (107) was certainly up to the task in 2016. The 6'1", 241-pound senior is an aggressive run stopper with the speed to pursue sideline-to-sideline and is also solid in pass coverage.

Outside linebacker D.J. Palmore emerged as a force coming off the edge a year ago, leading the team in tackles for a loss (11.5) and sacks (six).

The Midshipmen boast a pair of safeties who are solid in run support in Alohi Gilman and Sean Williams. Gilman is a star in the making. Navy needs to improve at the cornerback spot after Tyris Wooten, Elijah Merchant and Jarid Ryan were picked on repeatedly in 2016.

Defensive coordinator Dale Pehrson likes the potential of nose guard Jackson Pittman, a real space eater at 304 pounds. Pittman, who must take on double-teams and hold the point of attack in Navy's system, will be playing a lot more snaps after moving from a backup role.

Jarvis Polu, who played in all 13 games as a plebe and started all 14 games as a sophomore, is well on the way to becoming one of the best defensive ends in Navy history.

SPECIALISTS Bennett Moehring set a single-season school record by making 65 (out of 68) extra points, and he also converted 8-of-10 field goal attempts in totaling 89 points, third highest in program history for a kicker. Erik Harris proved himself a capable punter in 2016, averaging 45.1 yards on 10 attempts.

FINAL ANALYSIS Getting swept by service academy rivals Air Force and Army cast a dark shadow over an otherwise successful 2016 season. You can bet that coach Ken Niumatalolo has put increased emphasis on recapturing the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy.

Navy's defense, which was porous last season, is expected to be vastly improved and may need to win some games early while a young, inexperienced offense settles in. The Midshipmen have posted winning records in 13 of the last 14 seasons, and there is no reason to believe that remarkable run of success won't continue in 2017.



ZACH ABEY

"You don't know a name on their roster, but they're the last team you want a play on a short week or after a road trip."

– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	**88**	**Tyler Carmona (Sr.)**	82	Craig Scott (Sr.)	
WR	87	Brandon Colon (Sr.)	89	Taylor Jackson (Jr.)	
LT	57	Jake Hawk (Jr.)	76	Kendel Wright (So.)	
LG	75	Robert Lindsey (Sr.)	78	Laurent Njiki (Jr.)	
C	62	Parker Wade (Sr.)	68	David Forney (So.)	
RG	**71**	**Evan Martin (Sr.)**	64	Steve Satchell (Jr.)	
RT	**61**	**Andrew Wood (Jr.)**	72	Ford Higgins (So.)	
QB	9	Zach Abey (Jr.)	7	Garret Lewis (Jr.)	
FB	**33**	**Chris High (Sr.)**	38	Anthony Gargiulo (Jr.)	
SB	29	Darryl Bonner (Sr.)	28	Josh Brown (Sr.)	
SB	10	Malcolm Perry (So.)	21	Tre Walker (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (6)

LE	**90**	**Jarvis Polu (Jr.)**	95	Anthony Villalobos (Jr.)	
NG	99	Jackson Pittman (So.)	58	Joshua Van Dunk (So.)	
RE	91	Tyler Sayles (Sr.)	96	Nizaire Cromartie (So.)	
OLB	5	Justin Norton (Sr.)	11	Jerry Thompson (Sr.)	
ILB	**44**	**Micah Thomas (Sr.)**	3	Brandon Jones (Sr.)	
ILB	53	Hudson Sullivan (Jr.)	54	Taylor Heflin (Jr.)	
OLB	**45**	**D.J. Palmore (Sr.)**	40	Kevin McCoy (Sr.)	
CB	2	Jarid Ryan (Jr.)	26	Elijah Jones (Jr.)	
CB	14	Elijah Merchant (Sr.)	**17**	**Tyris Wooten (Sr.)**	
FS	**1**	**Alohi Gilman (So.)**	13	Juan Hailey (Jr.)	
SS	**6**	**Sean Williams (Jr.)**	8	Randy Beggs (Sr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	16	Bennett Moehring (Jr.)	**KR**	21	Tre Walker (Jr.)
P	43	Erik Harris (Jr.)	**PR**	82	Craig Scott (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Zach Abey, 35-20-352-4, 1 TD
Rushing: Chris High, 85 att., 546 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Darryl Bonner, 10 rec., 278 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Micah Thomas, 107
Sacks: D.J. Palmore, 6.0
Interceptions: Tyris Wooten, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Ken Niumatalolo
Record at School: 77-42 (9 years)
Career Record: 77-42 (9 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Ivin Jasper
Defensive Coordinator: Dale Pehrson
Annapolis, MD • Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium (34,000)

Navy Athletics

SMU MUSTANGS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **82** • AAC WEST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 3-5 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Stephen F. Austin
Sept.	9	North Texas
Sept.	16	at TCU
Sept.	23	Arkansas State
Sept.	30	Connecticut
Oct.	7	at Houston
Oct.	21	at Cincinnati
Oct.	27	Tulsa
Nov.	4	UCF
Nov.	11	at Navy
Nov.	18	at Memphis
Nov.	25	Tulane

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 AAC

Sept.	3	at North Texas	W	34-21
Sept.	10	at Baylor	L	13-40
Sept.	17	Liberty	W	29-14
Sept.	23	TCU	L	3-33
Oct.	1	at Temple	L	20-45
Oct.	7	at Tulsa	(ot) L	40-43
Oct.	22	Houston	W	38-16
Oct.	29	at Tulane	W	35-31
Nov.	5	Memphis	L	7-51
Nov.	12	at East Carolina	W	55-31
Nov.	19	South Florida	L	27-35
Nov.	26	Navy	L	31-75

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. D.J. Gillins, QB, Jacksonville, FL*
2. Alan Ali, OL, Fort Worth, TX
3. Matthew Huhn, OL, San Antonio, TX
4. Judah Bell, WR, Tyler TX
5. Hayden Howerton, OL, Katy, TX
6. Kayce Medlock, RB, Arp, TX
7. Tyler Page, WR, Friendswood, TX
8. Toby Ndukwe, DL, Richmond, TX
9. Austin Upshaw, QB, La Porte, TX
10. Harrison Loveless, DL, Cypress, TX

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.7 ppg	8	71
Rushing	163.3 ypg	6	81
Passing	264.0 ypg	5	34
Total	427.3 ypg	7	55
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	36.3 ppg	12	111
Rushing	210.5 ypg	11	97
Passing	242.5 ypg	7	80
Total	453.0 ypg	10	103
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.17	5	47

STAT CORNER

-1.06

SMU averaged 3.93 points per trip inside the 40 (110th) and allowed 4.99 points (112th), a margin of minus-1.06 points per trip.

OFFENSE Thrust into the starting lineup in the first game last season, quarterback Ben Hicks performed well in place of the injured Matt Davis. Hicks overcame early struggles, transformed into a leader and took control of an offense that improved in all areas.

But even with the departure of Davis, who opted to turn pro instead of return for a possible sixth collegiate season, Hicks will get challenged for the starting job by transfers Rafe Peavey (Arkansas) and D.J. Gillens (junior college after two years at Wisconsin).

The eventual starter will have the luxury of a talented corps of receivers that can spread the field. Courtland Sutton, a projected first-to-mid-second-round draft pick, chose to return for his junior year. He finished last season with a team-high 76 catches, 1,246 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns. He will be joined by James Proche, confident after a strong first season, and transfer Trey Quinn, who started nine games in two years at LSU. Braeden West rushed for 1,036 yards as a sophomore and had 100-plus yards in five of his last seven games.

For a deep group of skill players to be explosive, the Mustangs must be stronger up front. Evan Brown provides a stable anchor after a remarkable junior year. His leadership will be vital as young players fill spots vacated by the graduation of mainstays Daniel McCarty and Chauncey Briggs.

DEFENSE The bend-but-don't-break unit improved last year, particularly in forcing turnovers. The Mustangs tied for ninth nationally with 18 interceptions, up from 10 the previous season, and added eight fumble recoveries.

Justin Lawler has become a major force on the defensive line after starting every game the last two years. He anchored the defense, finishing fifth in the AAC in tackles for a loss (15.0) and tied for eighth in sacks (6.0). But no other lineman coming back registered more than 25 tackles last season. Watch for Demerick Gary, who posted 21 tackles and 4.0 sacks as a true freshman, to blossom.

Much help will be needed from a linebacking crew that has struggled the past two seasons. Kyran Mitchell, RC Cox and Anthony Rhone have flashed strong potential, but the entire group must reduce the number of missed tackles and mental errors. They have plenty of freedom in the defensive scheme to become playmakers.

The secondary welcomes back Jordan Wyatt and Rodney Clemons but must replace a leadership void created by the graduation of Horace Richardson and Darrion Millines.

SPECIALISTS Struggles on kick returns and coverage put pressure on the SMU offense and defense in terms of field position. Proche, Kevin Thomas and Kevin Johnson have the tools to succeed as returners. One of them needs to own the job. Jamie Sackville averaged 39.6 yards per punt and pinned opponents inside the 20-yard line 21 times as a freshman. The Australian should be better with a year of experience. The same goes for placekicker Josh Williams, who made 17-of-22 field goals but has yet to flourish from distance.

FINAL ANALYSIS In his third season, Chad Morris has SMU positioned for success. After going 2–10 in 2015, the Mustangs were on the verge of bowl eligibility at 5–5 last season, but they lost the final two games to South Florida and Navy.

Morris has made big inroads in changing the program's culture with dramatic leaps in recruiting, depth and overall performance. Tweaks in the power spread scheme, including a faster pace, bolstered the offense, which ranked 55th nationally last year (427.3 ypg). Mobility at quarterback, or better protection for Hicks — if he wins the job — will be needed. The defense also must take another step forward after ranking 103rd nationally a year ago.



COURTLAND SUTTON

"Chad Morris is a QB away from a breakout season. The receiver group is good. You put a competent QB in there, and they'll light you up."
– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	3	**James Proche (So.)**	2	Xavier Castille (Jr.)	
WR	18	Trey Quinn (Jr.)	22	Myron Gaillard (So.)	
WR	16	**Courtland Sutton (Jr.)**	9	**Shelby Walker (Sr.)**	
LT	68	**Nick Natour (Jr.)**	77	Alan Ali (Fr.)	
LG	72	**Braylon Hyder (Sr.)**	70	Kadarius Smith (Fr.)	
C	63	**Evan Brown (Sr.)**	69	Jacob Todora (Fr.)	
RG	76	Jerry Saena (Sr.)	57	Chad Pursley (Jr.)	
RT	64	Bryce Wilds (So.)	74	Braxton Webb (Fr.)	
TE	24	Mitchell Kaufman (Jr.)	14	Ryan Becker (So.)	
QB	8	**Ben Hicks (So.)**	12	Rafe Peavey (Jr.)	
RB	6	**Braeden West (Jr.)**	13	Ke'Mon Freeman (So.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	23	Nick Horton (Sr.)	35	Delontae Scott (So.)
DT	10	Demerick Gary (So.)	94	Chris Biggurs (So.)
NT	93	Mason Gentry (Sr.)	95	J.T. Williams (Sr.)
DE	99	**Justin Lawler (Sr.)**	7	Michael Badejo (So.)
WLB	11	**Kyran Mitchell (Jr.)**	22	Matt McNew (Jr.)
MLB	48	**Anthony Rhone (Sr.)**	9	Shaine Hailey (Fr.)
SLB	32	RC Cox (Sr.)	17	Jordon Williams (So.)
CB	15	**Jordan Wyatt (Jr.)**	28	Christian Davis (So.)
CB	18	William Jeanlys (Jr.)	1	Eric Sutton (So.)
SS	4	Mikial Onu (So.)	6	Elijah McQueen (Fr.)
FS	8	**Rodney Clemons (So.)**	12	Kevin Johnson (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	14	Josh Williams (Jr.)	KR	3	James Proche (So.)
P	47	Jamie Sackville (So.)	PR	3	James Proche (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ben Hicks, 422-234-2,930-15, 19 TDs
Rushing: Braeden West, 202 att., 1,036 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Courtland Sutton, 76 rec., 1,246 yds., 10 TDs
Tackles: Kyran Mitchell, 67
Sacks: Justin Lawler, 6.0
Interceptions: Jordan Wyatt, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Chad Morris
Record at School: 7-17 (2 years)
Career Record: 7-17 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Joe Craddock
Defensive Coordinator: Van Malone
Dallas, TX • Gerald J. Ford Stadium (32,000)

SMU Athletics

TULANE GREEN WAVE

NATIONAL FORECAST: **100** • AAC WEST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 2-6 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Grambling State	
Sept. 9	at Navy	
Sept. 16	at Oklahoma	
Sept. 23	Army	
Oct. 7	Tulsa	
Oct. 14	at FIU	
Oct. 21	South Florida	
Oct. 27	at Memphis	
Nov. 4	Cincinnati	
Nov. 11	at East Carolina	
Nov. 18	Houston	
Nov. 25	at SMU	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 1-7 AAC

Sept. 1	at Wake Forest		L	3-7
Sept. 10	Southern		W	66-21
Sept. 17	Navy		L	14-21
Sept. 24	Louisiana	(ot)	W	41-39
Oct. 1	at Massachusetts		W	31-24
Oct. 14	Memphis		L	14-24
Oct. 22	at Tulsa		L	27-50
Oct. 29	SMU		L	31-35
Nov. 5	at UCF		L	6-37
Nov. 12	at Houston		L	18-30
Nov. 19	Temple		L	0-31
Nov. 26	at Connecticut		W	38-13

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Khalil McClain, ATH, Fairburn, GA
2. Michael Scott, DE, Tallahassee, FL
3. Will Wallace, TE, Natchez, MS
4. Joey Claybrook, OL, Starkville, MS
5. KJ Vault, LB, Hoover, AL
6. Monty Montgomery, LB, Norcross, GA
7. Chase Kuerschen, DB, Knoxville, TN
8. Jaylon Monroe, DB, Mesquite, TX
9. Jaetavian Toles, WR, Stratford, TX
10. Kevin LeDee, WR, Cypress Ridge, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.1 ppg	10	104
Rushing	228.1 ypg	4	26
Passing	113.3 ypg	12	126
Total	341.4 ypg	11	118
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.7 ppg	5	60
Rushing	159.3 ypg	4	52
Passing	205.3 ypg	3	33
Total	364.5 ypg	3	31
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+9	+0.75	1	13

STAT CORNER

+9.3

Tulane's field position margin improved by 9.3 yards per drive in 2016, from minus-7.9 to plus-1.4. Only Idaho's improved by more.

OFFENSE Coach Willie Fritz has won everywhere he has been, but he had no shot in his first year at Tulane. None of the quarterbacks he inherited had thrown a pass in college football, making the Green Wave unique in FBS. The outlook is much better in Year 2 thanks to the spring arrival of dual-threat Jonathan Banks, whose skill set matches what Fritz wants to do.

Banks, a one-time four-star recruit, spent a year at Kansas State in between two junior college starting stints. Even if Banks does not win the job, junior Glen Cuiellette and sophomore Johnathan Brantley will be more comfortable with a year of experience in Fritz' run-heavy, spread-based shotgun system that incorporates elements of the zone read and the triple option.

The rest of the offense should be improved, too. Tulane, which averaged 228.1 rushing yards after managing 115.8 in 2015, goes four deep at running back, starting with shifty senior Dontrell Hilliard (1,857 career yards on a 5.4 average). Junior Terren Encalade (36 catches, 500 yards, six TDs) leads a group of young receivers who learned on the job a year ago. Junior college transfer Jabril Clewis, a former San Diego State signee, adds the size Fritz wants at wideout.

Center Junior Diaz, back from a fractured ankle that sidelined him for the final nine games of 2016, leads a line that boasts five players with starting experience.

DEFENSE The key question is how Tulane will replace disruptive defensive tackle Tanzel Smart (18.5 tackles for a loss in 2016) and diminutive linebacker Nico Marley (school-record 50.5 tackles for a loss), a pair of two-time first-team All-AAC selections. The Wave have talent and experience across the defense, but guys like that duo come along maybe once a decade.

Senior end Ade Aruna, raw when he arrived at Tulane, could blossom into an All-AAC performer with his combination of speed and explosiveness. Five more ends who played regularly a year ago are back, which allowed the coaches to experiment with Aruna inside at times in the spring as they looked for ways to take full advantage of the talent on hand.

Senior cornerback Parry Nickerson, a three-year starter with 10 career interceptions, earned second-team All-AAC honors in 2016. He is part of secondary that has four starters back, including leading returning tacklers Jarrod Franklin and Roderic Teamer.

Tulane is thin at linebacker and will rely heavily on the tandem of Zach Harris and Rae Juan Marbley, who combined for nine starts a year ago.

SPECIALISTS Fritz inherited a disaster-prone special teams unit. Progress was made, but there were still plenty of issues last fall, including four muffed punts. Placekicking is the great unknown. Andrew DiRocco decided not to return for his senior year, leaving a cast of untested kickers to compete for the job. Punter Zachary Block will look to improve on a mediocre sophomore season (40.8-yard average).

FINAL ANALYSIS Tulane should be more competitive now that Fritz and his players are familiar with each other. Simply getting his quarterbacks to know when to pitch or run on options proved challenging a year ago, when Tulane beat UConn in its finale to avoid its first winless conference season since it left the SEC in the 1960s.

Being more competitive, however, won't necessarily translate into more wins. Not only do the Wave play in the far more difficult West Division of the AAC, but they must also face USF, the overwhelming favorite in the East. And don't forget about a game at Oklahoma. Anything close to a .500 record would be a great accomplishment.



DONTRELL HILLIARD

"That offense is great at providing matchup problems if you're not disciplined and smart with your front seven. ... He's a really good coach."
– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	5	**Terren Encalade (Jr.)**	15	Jacob Robertson (Jr.)	
WR	86	**Darnell Mooney (So.)**	7	Devin Glenn (Jr.)	
WR	85	Jabril Clewis (Jr.)	81	D.J. Owens (So.)	
LT	50	Tyler Johnson (So.)	53	Keyshawn McLeod (So.)	
LG	73	**Leeward Brown (So.)**	76	John Washington (So.)	
C	51	Junior Diaz (Jr.)	69	Hunter Knighton (Sr.)	
RG	52	Dominique Briggs (Jr.)	69	Hunter Knighton (Sr.)	
RT	72	**John Leglue (Jr.)**	74	Devon Johnson (Jr.)	
TE	84	Charles Jones II (Jr.)	89	**Kendall Ardoin (Jr.)**	
QB	4	Jonathan Banks (Jr.)	14	**Glen Cuiellette (Jr.)**	
RB	26	**Dontrell Hilliard (Sr.)**	3	Sherman Badie (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (8)

DE	90	**Robert Kennedy (Jr.)**	44	Luke Jackson (Sr.)	
DT	94	**Sean Wilson (Sr.)**	65	Braynon Edwards (Jr.)	
DT	91	Eldrick Washington (Sr.)	48	D'Andre Williams (So.)	
DE	87	**Ade Aruna (Sr.)**	57	Peter Woullard (Jr.)	
LB	40	**Zachery Harris (Jr.)**	36	Larry Bryant (So.)	
LB	56	Rae Juan Marbley (Sr.)	35	Lawrence Graham (So.)	
NB	6	**Jarrod Franklin (Sr.)**	16	P.J. Hall (So.)	
CB	17	**Parry Nickerson (Sr.)**	32	Stephon Lofton (Jr.)	
CB	21	**Donnie Lewis Jr. (Jr.)**	37	Thakarius Keyes (So.)	
SS	38	**Roderic Teamer Jr. (Jr.)**	12	Sean Harper (So)	
FS	19	Taris Shenall (Jr.)	4	Will Harper (So.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	45	Randy Harvey (Jr.)	KR	26	Dontrell Hilliard (Sr.)
P	49	Zachary Block (Jr.)	PR	26	Dontrell Hilliard (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Glen Cuiellette, 237-101-1,309-8, 10 TDs
Rushing: Dontrell Hilliard, 135 att., 759 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Terren Encalade, 36 rec., 500 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Jarrod Franklin, 78
Sacks: Ade Aruna, 5.0
Interceptions: Parry Nickerson, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Willie Fritz
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 158-77 (20 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Doug Ruse
Defensive Coordinator: Jack Curtis
New Orleans, LA • Yulman Stadium (30,000)

Tulane Athletics

TULSA GOLDEN HURRICANE

NATIONAL FORECAST: **74** • AAC WEST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 AAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Oklahoma State
Sept.	9	UL Lafayette
Sept.	16	at Toledo
Sept.	23	New Mexico
Sept.	30	Navy
Oct.	7	at Tulane
Oct.	14	Houston
Oct.	21	at Connecticut
Oct.	27	at SMU
Nov.	3	Memphis
Nov.	18	at South Florida
Nov.	25	Temple

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 6-2 AAC

Sept.	3	San Jose State	W	45-10
Sept.	10	at Ohio State	L	3-48
Sept.	17	North Carolina A&T	W	58-21
Sept.	24	at Fresno State (ot)	W	48-41
Oct.	7	SMU (ot)	W	43-40
Oct.	15	at Houston	L	31-38
Oct.	22	Tulane	W	50-27
Oct.	29	at Memphis	W	59-30
Nov.	5	East Carolina	W	45-24
Nov.	12	at Navy	L	40-42
Nov.	19	at UCF	W	35-20
Nov.	25	Cincinnati (ot)	W	40-37
Dec.	19	vs. Central Michigan #	W	55-20

#Miami Beach Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Sam Crawford, WR, Rockwall, TX
2. Dante Bivens, OL, Spring, TX
3. Daiquain Jackson, S, Mesquite, TX
4. Marcus Mays, S, Tulsa, OK
5. Seth Boomer, QB, Collinsville, OK
6. Deven Lamp, DE, Cedar Hill, TX
7. Keylon Stokes, WR, Manvel, TX
8. Zaven Collins, ATH, Hominy, OK
9. Garrett Flanary, DT, Bixby, OK
10. Akayleb Evans, CB, McKinney, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	42.5 ppg	2	7
Rushing	261.7 ypg	3	8
Passing	265.3 ypg	4	30
Total	527.0 ypg	1	4
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.8 ppg	8	76
Rushing	176.3 ypg	6	68
Passing	250.2 ypg	9	92
Total	426.5 ypg	7	75
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
0	0.00	9	67

STAT CORNER

103

Tulsa had 103 rushes of 10-plus yards, 11th in FBS and 43 more than in 2015. The result: an improvement of 5.3 points per game.

OFFENSE The Golden Hurricane made FBS history last year as the first team to have a 3,000-yard passer, two 1,000-yard receivers and two 1,000-yard rushers. Of the five skill-position players involved in accomplishing that feat, only one is back in 2017: D'Angelo Brewer, who leads a deep running back corps that again will be a key strength.

Powering the ground game is an offensive line that returns four starters after dominating the trenches last year and propelling Tulsa to a school-record eight games with at least 300 rushing yards. Center Chandler Miller, who has started all 26 games in his career, was a first-team all-conference selection in 2016.

For the first time since the 2010 season at Baylor, where he was offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, Philip Montgomery lacks a returning scholarship quarterback who is a junior or senior. The graduation of Dane Evans, who blossomed under Montgomery into the leading passer in Tulsa history, leaves a huge void. Underclassmen Chad President and Luke Skipper have emerged as the candidates at quarterback, and while they're both more mobile than Evans was, neither has his arm strength.

Gone are primary targets Josh Atkinson and Keevan Lucas, leaving Justin Hobbs as the only wideout with significant experience. Keenen Johnson, who emerged as a freshman last season, is expected to develop into the next dynamic weapon, while Lucas' younger brother, Keylon Stokes, is one of several promising receivers from the Class of 2017 who could join the rotation in their first season.

DEFENSE Since quietly turning a corner and improving in almost every statistical category last year, the Tulsa defense has had to replace valuable pieces, including top tacklers Trent Martin and Matt Linscott. Craig Suits, a Freshman All-American in 2014, is the lone returning linebacker who has seen substantial playing time.

The defensive line could suffer a drop-off after losing two underrated senior tackles, but veteran ends Jesse Brubaker and Jeremy Smith will be counted on to be among the team's most consistent playmakers. As a junior, Brubaker led Tulsa with 13.5 tackles for a loss and two pick-sixes.

To address an obvious lack of speed and depth, six highly regarded defensive backs were signed in the offseason and could contribute if needed this fall. McKinley Whitfield, destined to become a star since arriving on campus, moves into a full-time starting role at safety and headlines a secondary attempting to cut down on the explosive plays that have been a recurring issue in recent seasons.

SPECIALISTS Back at placekicker is Redford Jones, who was 67-of-67 on PATs and had one missed field goal from within 40 yards last season while also handling kickoff duties. To replace Dalton Parks, the most experienced punter in program history, Tulsa brought in Thomas Bennett, a former Baylor walk-on whose father, Darren, was a two-time Pro Bowl punter with the San Diego Chargers.

FINAL ANALYSIS After winning six games in his first year, Montgomery overwhelmingly exceeded expectations in 2016 by delivering a 10–3 record and a second-place finish in the American Athletic Conference's West Division, completing the turnaround from the 2–10 season that preceded his hiring.

To continue rebuilding the program and establishing the Hurricane as perennial contenders in the league, Montgomery will have to do his best coaching job given the high turnover, particularly from an offense that carried the team in the previous two seasons. If the defense can dramatically ramp up its performance despite relying heavily on youth, Montgomery will become only the second coach in program history to make bowl appearances in three consecutive seasons.



D'ANGELO BREWER

"If they find the right guy to replace [quarterback] Dane Evans, they're good enough to compete for the conference title again this year."

– An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	29	**Justin Hobbs (Jr.)**	23	Jordan Brown (Fr.)
WR	5	Brodrick Umblance (Sr.)	1	Josh Stewart (Fr.)
WR	8	**Keenen Johnson (So.)**	7	Bishop Louie (Sr.)
LT	66	**Evan Plagg (Sr.)**	76	Waahid Muhammad (Fr.)
LG	72	**Tyler Bowling (Jr.)**	67	Tristan Wyatt (So.)
C	74	**Chandler Miller (Jr.)**	70	Clay Greathouse (Fr.)
RG	53	Zac Uhles (Sr.)	68	Tiller Bucktrot (Fr.)
RT	58	**Willie Wright (Jr.)**	65	Christopher Ivy Jr. (So.)
TE	6	Chris Minter (Jr.)	33	Rob Riederer (Sr.)
QB	13	Luke Skipper (Fr.)	10	Chad President (So.)
RB	4	**D'Angelo Brewer (Sr.)**	25	Ramadi Warren (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	98	**Jeremy Smith (Sr.)**	96	Myles Mouton (Jr.)
DT	85	Kolton Shindelar (Sr.)	87	Jimmy Nelson (Fr.)
DT	54	Shemarr Robinson (So.)	89	Payton Prince (Jr.)
DE	8	**Jesse Brubaker (Sr.)**	90	Frankie Davis (Sr.)
STAR	6	Diamon Cannon (So.)	24	Treyvon Reeves (Fr.)
MLB	42	Cooper Edmiston (So.)	44	Petera Wilson Jr. (Sr.)
WLB	28	**Craig Suits (Sr.)**	4	Robert Revels III (So.)
CB	2	**Kerwin Thomas (Sr.)**	11	Keidrien Wadley (So.)
CB	9	**Reggie Robinson II (So.)**	1	**Keanu Hill (Sr.)**
S	5	McKinley Whitfield (Jr.)	30	Cristian Williams (So.)
S	13	**Jordan Mitchell (Sr.)**	10	Manny Bunch (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	19	Redford Jones (Sr.)	KR	27	Bishop Louie (Sr.)
P	3	Thomas Bennett (So.)	PR	16	Jarion Anderson (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chad President, 2-1-9-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: D'Angelo Brewer, 264 att., 1,435 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Justin Hobbs, 50 rec., 685 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Craig Suits, 79
Sacks: Petera Wilson Jr., 6.5
Interceptions: Jesse Brubaker, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Philip Montgomery
Record at School: 16-10 (2 years)
Career Record: 16-10 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Philip Montgomery
Defensive Coordinators: Bill Young, Brian Norwood
Tulsa, OK • H.A. Chapman Stadium (30,000)

Tulsa Athletics

BIG 12 PREVIEW


MARK ANDREWS


CHRIS WARREN III

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1. OKLAHOMA **SOONERS** 11-2, 8-1
2. TEXAS **LONGHORNS** 9-4, 7-2
3. OKLAHOMA STATE **COWBOYS** 9-3, 6-3
4. KANSAS STATE **WILDCATS** 8-4, 5-4
5. WEST VIRGINIA **MOUNTAINEERS** 7-5, 5-4
6. TCU **HORNED FROGS** 7-5, 5-4
7. BAYLOR **BEARS** 6-6, 3-6
8. IOWA STATE **CYCLONES** 5-7, 3-6
9. TEXAS TECH **RED RAIDERS** 5-7, 3-6
10. KANSAS **JAYHAWKS** 3-9, 0-9

Big 12 Championship: Oklahoma over Texas

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Sugar Bowl: Oklahoma 35, Auburn 19
Alamo Bowl: Oklahoma State 38, Colorado 8
Russell Athletic Bowl: Miami (Fla.) 31, West Virginia 14
Texas Bowl: Kansas State 33, Texas A&M 28
Liberty Bowl: Georgia 31, TCU 23
Cactus Bowl: Baylor 31, Boise State 12

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Cotton Bowl: Oklahoma vs. Michigan
Alamo Bowl: Texas vs. Stanford
Camping World Bowl: Oklahoma State vs. Notre Dame
Cactus Bowl: Kansas State vs. Utah
Liberty Bowl: West Virginia vs. South Carolina
Heart of Dallas Bowl: TCU vs. UTSA
Texas Bowl: Baylor vs. Arkansas

Anderws: Chris Covatta; Warren: AP; Crawford: Fred Vuich

2016 BIG 12 STANDINGS

	BIG12	OVERALL
OKLAHOMA	9-0	11-2
OKLAHOMA STATE	7-2	10-3
WEST VIRGINIA	7-2	10-3
KANSAS STATE	6-3	9-4
TCU	4-5	6-7
BAYLOR	3-6	7-6
TEXAS	3-6	5-7
TEXAS TECH	3-6	5-7
IOWA STATE	2-7	3-9
KANSAS	1-8	2-10

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. Oklahoma
2. Texas
3. TCU
4. Oklahoma State
5. Baylor
6. Texas Tech
7. Iowa State
8. West Virginia
9. Kansas State
10. Kansas

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
BAYLOR	7	3	10	7	7	7	8
IOWA STATE	9	8	4	10	9	9	7
KANSAS	10	10	8	8	6	10	10
KANSAS STATE	3	6	6	2	2	8	3
OKLAHOMA	1	7	7	1	4	2	1
OKLAHOMA STATE	2	4	1	5	3	4	6
TCU	6	2	3	4	5	1	2
TEXAS	5	5	5	3	1	3	4
TEXAS TECH	8	9	2	9	10	6	9
WEST VIRGINIA	4	1	9	6	8	5	5



JUSTIN CRAWFORD

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Baker Mayfield	6-1	218	Sr.	Oklahoma
RB	Justin Crawford	6-0	202	Sr.	West Virginia
RB	Justice Hill	5-10	185	So.	Oklahoma State
AP	Kyle Hicks	5-10	210	Sr.	TCU
WR	Allen Lazard	6-5	223	Sr.	Iowa State
WR	James Washington	6-0	205	Sr.	Oklahoma State
TE	Mark Andrews	6-5	253	Jr.	Oklahoma
C	Austin Schlottmann	6-6	300	Sr.	TCU
OL	Kyle Bosch	6-5	310	Sr.	West Virginia
OL	Orlando Brown	6-8	360	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Dalton Risner	6-5	300	Jr.	Kansas State
OL	Connor Williams	6-6	320	Jr.	Texas

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Dorance Armstrong Jr.	6-4	246	Jr.	Kansas
DL	Malcolm Roach	6-3	270	So.	Texas
DL	K.J. Smith	6-2	260	Sr.	Baylor
DL	Reggie Walker	6-2	235	So.	Kansas State
LB	Travin Howard	6-1	213	Sr.	TCU
LB	Malik Jefferson	6-3	240	Jr.	Texas
LB	Ogbonnia Okoronkwo	6-1	242	Sr.	Oklahoma
CB	D.J. Reed	5-9	188	Jr.	Kansas State
CB	Jordan Thomas	6-0	186	Sr.	Oklahoma
S	Kamari Cotton-Moya	6-1	200	Sr.	Iowa State
S	Tre Flowers	6-3	200	Sr.	Oklahoma State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Clayton Hatfield	5-10	185	Jr.	Texas Tech
P	Michael Dickson	6-3	205	Jr.	Texas
KR	Byron Pringle	6-2	205	Jr.	Kansas State
PR	KaVontae Turpin	5-9	153	Jr.	TCU

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Mason Rudolph	6-5	230	Sr.	Oklahoma State
RB	Chris Warren III	6-3	250	Jr.	Texas
RB	Terence Williams	6-1	220	Jr.	Baylor
AP	KaVontae Turpin	5-9	153	Jr.	TCU
WR	Keke Coutee	5-11	180	Jr.	Texas Tech
WR	Jonathan Giles	6-0	190	Jr.	Texas Tech
WR	Jalen McCleskey	5-10	170	Jr.	Oklahoma State
C	Zach Shackelford	6-4	305	So.	Texas
OL	Zachary Crabtree	6-7	310	Sr.	Oklahoma State
OL	Bobby Evans	6-4	316	So.	Oklahoma
OL	Scott Frantz	6-5	293	So.	Kansas State
OL	Ben Powers	6-4	314	Jr.	Oklahoma

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Poona Ford	6-0	310	Sr.	Texas
DL	Will Geary	6-0	298	Sr.	Kansas State
DL	Breckyn Hager	6-4	245	Jr.	Texas
DL	Daniel Wise	6-3	290	Jr.	Kansas
LB	Caleb Kelly	6-3	221	So.	Oklahoma
LB	Chad Whitener	6-0	240	Sr.	Oklahoma State
LB	Taylor Young	5-10	225	Sr.	Baylor
CB	Brian Peavy	5-9	190	Jr.	Iowa State
CB	Ranthony Texada	5-10	170	Sr.	TCU
S	Dravon Askew-Henry	6-0	195	Jr.	West Virginia
S	Nick Orr	5-10	187	Sr.	TCU

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Matthew McCrane	5-10	165	Sr.	Kansas State
P	Zach Sinor	5-10	223	Jr.	Oklahoma State
KR	KaVontae Turpin	5-9	153	Jr.	TCU
PR	Tony Nicholson	5-10	185	So.	Baylor

BAYLOR BEARS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **47** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 3-6 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Liberty
Sept.	9	UTSA
Sept.	16	at Duke
Sept.	23	Oklahoma
Sept.	30	at Kansas State
Oct.	14	at Oklahoma State
Oct.	21	West Virginia
Oct.	28	Texas
Nov.	4	at Kansas
Nov.	11	vs. Texas Tech #
Nov.	18	Iowa State
Nov.	24	at TCU

#Arlington, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 3-6 BIG 12

Sept.	2	Northwestern State	W	55-7
Sept.	10	SMU	W	40-13
Sept.	16	at Rice	W	38-10
Sept.	24	Oklahoma State	W	35-24
Oct.	1	at Iowa State	W	45-42
Oct.	15	Kansas	W	49-7
Oct.	29	at Texas	L	34-35
Nov.	5	TCU	L	22-62
Nov.	12	at Oklahoma	L	24-45
Nov.	19	Kansas State	L	21-42
Nov.	25	vs. Texas Tech #	L	35-54
Dec.	3	at West Virginia	L	21-24
Dec.	27	vs. Boise State %	W	31-12

#Arlington %Cactus Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Xavier Newman, OL, DeSoto, TX
2. Gavin Holmes, WR, Justin, TX
3. R.J. Sneed, WR, Cypress, TX
4. Trestan Ebner, WR, Henderson, TX
5. Johnathan Lovett, RB, Burlington, NJ
6. Harrison Hand, CB, Cherry Hill, NJ
7. DeMarco Artis, LB, Sanford, FL
8. Timarcus Davis, CB, College Station, TX
9. James Lynch, DL, Round Rock, TX
10. Justin Harris, DL, Gonzales, LA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.6 ppg	4	35
Rushing	241.8 ypg	1	14
Passing	280.9 ypg	4	24
Total	522.7 ypg	3	6
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.0 ppg	6	71
Rushing	200.7 ypg	7	87
Passing	230.2 ypg	2	71
Total	430.8 ypg	4	81
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.38	9	97

STAT CORNER

-1.3

In 2015, Baylor averaged 5.6 points per trip inside the 40 (first in the nation). In 2016, that average fell 1.3 points to 4.3 (83rd).

OFFENSE Like a big melting pot, Baylor's blended offense takes a sprinkle of Temple's power offense with a tight end and fullback, adds in a few concepts from what Chip Kelly did with the San Francisco 49ers and throws it in with the spread attack that's made the Bears one of the most explosive teams in the country.

First-year head coach Matt Rhule insists that it's not as complicated as it sounds, saying, "You've got to give [defenses] different things they have to defend. ... The biggest thing is the ability to change tempo, change personnel groupings," he says. "We'll mainly be spread out with a couple bigger sets every once in a while — just really try to take advantage of what the defense is doing."

Grad transfer Anu Solomon from Arizona was brought in to compete for the quarterback job, but sophomore Zach Smith has the stronger arm and is expected to be at the helm. True freshman Charlie Brewer is expected to redshirt.

Even with KD Cannon and Ishmael Zamora both leaving early for the NFL, the receiving corps might be the deepest and most talented position group on the team. Blake Lynch, Chris Platt and Pooh Stricklin are the most experienced, but sophomore Denzel Mims could be the next in a lineage of talented Baylor receivers that includes Kendall Wright, Terrance Williams and Corey Coleman.

A power back who also has breakaway speed, Terence Williams gave Baylor a 1,000-yard rusher for the seventh straight year, racking up 1,048 yards and 11 touchdowns. With sophomore JaMycal Hasty, the Bears have one of the best 1-2 combos in the Big 12.

Three starters return up front with Blake Blackmar and Ishmael Wilson at the guards and Patrick Lawrence at right tackle, but the depth is razor-thin. Former junior college transfer Mo Porter steps in at left tackle and might have the most NFL potential.

DEFENSE With defensive coordinator Phil Snow, everything is in the details. "You do the little things, and the big things work," he says. "They don't quite understand that, they haven't totally bought into it yet, but it's a process. It takes about a year to learn this defense, and we're still in the early stages."

Snow has some nice pieces to build around, with All-Big 12 defensive end K.J. Smith and a fourth-year starter in Taylor Young at weak-side linebacker. Young has amassed 265 career tackles, while Smith had a breakout junior season with 67 tackles and a team-high seven sacks.

"As I watch all the kids, Taylor is our best defensive player, by far," Snow says. "He's playing a position that allows you to make a lot of plays, so he should have a really good year."

Greg Roberts, Cactus Bowl Defensive MVP Tyrone Hunt and four other returners have made starts on the defensive line and are joined by former high school All-American Brian Nance, who sat out last season.

The secondary was injury plagued in the spring, but there's plenty of promise with sophomores Jameson Houston and Grayland Arnold at the corners and Henry Black at safety.

SPECIALISTS Drew Galitz handled the punting (41.6-yard average) and kickoff duties last year and might even take over kicking chores if sophomore walk-ons Connor Martin and Peter Webster can't get it done.

FINAL ANALYSIS There are too many holes and question marks for Rhule to match the back-to-back 10-win seasons he had in his final two years at Temple. But Baylor — which returns 10 starters from a team that went 7–6 — is good enough to reach a bowl game for the eighth consecutive season.



TERENCE WILLIAMS

"I was very surprised they didn't hire a guy with Texas ties, but I'm not sure that's a bad thing. They just hired a good football coach plain and simple."
– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	**14**	**Chris Platt (Jr.)**	80	Jared Atkinson (So.)	
WR	82	Blake Lynch (So.)	13	Tony Nicholson (So.)	
WR	11	Pooh Stricklin (So.)	15	Denzel Mims (So.)	
LT	76	Mo Porter (Sr.)	70	Josh Pelzel (Jr.)	
LG	**68**	**Ishmael Wilson (Sr.)**	50	Tyrae Simmons (Sr.)	
C	57	Tanner Thrift (Sr.)	63	Daniel Russell (Sr.)	
RG	**72**	**Blake Blackmar (Jr.)**	62	Dalton Justice (So.)	
RT	**77**	**Patrick Lawrence (Jr.)**	79	Josh Malin (Jr.)	
TE	**85**	**Jordan Feuerbacher (Sr.)**	88	Sam Tecklenburg (So.)	
QB	13	Zach Smith (So.)	12	Anu Solomon (Sr.)	
RB	22	Terence Williams (Jr.)	20	JaMycal Hasty (So.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	**56**	**K.J. Smith (Sr.)**	**52**	**Greg Roberts (Jr.)**
NT	**97**	**Ira Lewis (Jr.)**	95	Bravvion Roy (So.)
DT	90	Tyrone Hunt (So.)	92	Micheal Johnson (So.)
DE	94	Xavier Jones (Jr.)	15	Brian Nance (Sr.)
WLB	**11**	**Taylor Young (Sr.)**	38	Jordan Williams (So.)
MLB	44	Clay Johnston (So.)	40	Deonte Williams (Fr.)
SLB	32	Lenoy Jones Jr. (So.)	49	Eric Ogor (So.)
CB	31	Grayland Arnold (So.)	27	Verkedric Vaughns (Jr.)
CB	11	Jameson Houston (So.)	23	Jourdan Blake (Jr.)
FS	21	Davion Hall (Sr.)	**18**	**Chance Waz (Sr.)**
SS	28	Henry Black (So.)	16	Chris Miller (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	34	Connor Martin (So.)	**KR**	13	Tony Nicholson (So.)
P	36	Drew Galitz (Jr.)	**PR**	13	Tony Nicholson (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Zach Smith, 196-116-1,526-7, 13 TDs
Rushing: Terence Williams, 185 att., 1,048 yds., 11 TDs
Receiving: Chris Platt, 35 rec., 567 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Taylor Young, 93
Sacks: K.J. Smith, 7.0
Interceptions: Three players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Matt Rhule
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 28-23 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Jeff Nixon, Glenn Thomas
Defensive Coordinator: Phil Snow
Waco, TX • McLane Stadium (45,140)

Tim Umphrey

IOWA STATE CYCLONES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **60** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **8** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 3-6 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Northern Iowa
Sept.	9	Iowa
Sept.	16	at Akron
Sept.	28	Texas
Oct.	7	at Oklahoma
Oct.	14	Kansas
Oct.	21	at Texas Tech
Oct.	28	TCU
Nov.	4	at West Virginia
Nov.	11	Oklahoma State
Nov.	18	at Baylor
Nov.	25	at Kansas State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-7 BIG 12

Sept.	3	Northern Iowa	L	20-25
Sept.	10	at Iowa	L	3-42
Sept.	17	at TCU	L	20-41
Sept.	24	San Jose State	W	44-10
Oct.	1	Baylor	L	42-45
Oct.	8	at Oklahoma State	L	31-38
Oct.	15	at Texas	L	6-27
Oct.	29	Kansas State	L	26-31
Nov.	3	Oklahoma	L	24-34
Nov.	12	at Kansas	W	31-24
Nov.	19	Texas Tech	W	66-10
Nov.	26	West Virginia	L	19-49

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kamilo Tongamoa, DL, Monroe, CA*
2. O'Rien Vance, LB, Cedar Rapids, IA
3. Ray Lima, DT, Los Angeles, CA*
4. Matt Leo, DL, Adelaide, Australia*
5. Keontae Jones, DB, Cincinnati, OH
6. Cordarrius Bailey, DE, Clarksdale, MS
7. Josh Johnson, WR, Maumelle, AR
8. O.J. Tucker, DB, Ocala, FL
9. Richard Bowens III, DB, West Bloomfield, MI
10. Devon Moore, QB, Waterloo, IA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.7 ppg	9	71
Rushing	162.8 ypg	8	82
Passing	258.8 ypg	6	40
Total	421.6 ypg	8	60
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.3 ppg	7	88
Rushing	218.2 ypg	8	103
Passing	234.8 ypg	3	75
Total	452.9 ypg	8	102
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.25	5	85

STAT CORNER

5.3/4.8

Iowa State allowed 5.3 points per trip inside the 40, 123rd in FBS. The Cyclones offense averaged 4.8 (38th) but constantly lost ground.

OFFENSE The first year for a coaching staff at a rebuilding program always brings a handful of challenges that come with transition. That was certainly the case for Matt Campbell at Iowa State in 2016. But despite finishing 3–9, there are reasons for optimism regarding the very near future of this program. Averaging 27.7 points per game, Iowa State finished Year 1 of the Campbell era ranked 71st nationally in scoring offense, which simply doesn't cut it in the offense-happy Big 12. But the good news here is that the 2017 crew has the potential to be the most explosive offense in the history of Iowa State football, although a few key components certainly need to come together.

That starts with junior quarterback Jacob Park, who must continue to improve for the Cyclones to peak. Park beat out senior Joel Lanning late last season and handled the majority of the snaps in the final five games. Park threw for 1,791 yards and 12 touchdowns without having a spring to fall back on or first-team reps in preseason camp. There is reason for optimism for this former five-star recruit who began his career at Georgia.

Iowa State is loaded at running back and wide receiver. The one-two punch of David Montgomery and Mike Warren combined for more than 1,000 rushing yards a year ago and should only improve in the second season with Campbell's system. At wideout, Allen Lazard will likely shatter every Iowa State receiving record with promising sophomore Deshaunte Jones on hand to complement him in the passing game.

For Iowa State's offense to take that next step will require progress from an offensive line that should be much better in 2017. Getting senior tackle Jake Campos back from a broken leg is a great start. The offseason addition of Michigan graduate transfer Dave Dawson was key. But sophomores Julian Good-Jones and Bryce Meeker must step up.

DEFENSE Iowa State addressed a major need in recruiting by snagging three junior college defensive linemen — Matt Leo, Ray Lima and Kamilo Tongamoa. All three prospects were heavily recruited by other Power 5 schools but chose Iowa State because of the chance to see the field early on. If that trio exceeds or even meets expectations, it could drastically raise the ceiling for the defense. JaQuan Bailey, a sophomore, led the Cyclones with 3.5 sacks as a true freshman and has a ton of upside.

Linebacker is a major concern for this defense. Willie Harvey, who tied for the team lead in tackles a year ago, is back and will start on the weak side, but after him, it is all unproven guys. Lanning spent the first four years of his career at quarterback, so he is a major question as he transitions to starting middle linebacker.

Iowa State's secondary starters are top-notch. Kamari Cotton-Moya, a senior free safety, is a major injury risk but when on the field is one of the best in the Big 12. Brian Peavy and D'Andre Payne are a formidable duo at corner.

SPECIALISTS Senior Colin Downing is back and should be one of the best punters in the country. Cole Netten, the top placekicker in school history, is gone. A handful of walk-ons will compete to fill his shoes.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Campbell era got off to a rough start, with a Week 1 loss to Northern Iowa followed up by a lopsided defeat to rival Iowa. But by the end of the year, Iowa State was competing with the best of the Big 12.

Now comes the most difficult task: winning some of those games and getting Iowa State back to the postseason for the first time since 2012. To make that happen, the Cyclones will have to show significant improvement in the trenches — on both sides of the ball.



ALLEN LAZARD

"You look at them in warmups, and they don't look like a Big 12 team. (Matt Campbell) has to change that, but he coached them as well as he could."
– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	8	Deshaunte Jones (So.)	**19**	**Trever Ryen (Sr.)**	
WR	**5**	**Allen Lazard (Sr.)**	83	Jalen Martin (Fr.)	
WR	18	Hakeem Butler (So.)	23	Matthew Eaton (Jr.)	
LT	75	Sean Foster (Fr.)	54	Josh Mueller (Fr.)	
LG	74	Bryce Meeker (So.)	70	Oge Udeogu (Jr.)	
C	**51**	**Julian Good-Jones (So.)**	63	Robby Garcia (Sr.)	
RG		Dave Dawson (Sr.)	70	Oge Odeogu (Jr.)	
RT	67	Jake Campos (Sr.)	79	Shawn Curtis (Sr.)	
TE	11	Chase Allen (Fr.)	**87**	**Sam Harms (Sr.)**	
QB	10	Jacob Park (Jr.)	4	Zeb Noland (Fr.)	
RB	32	David Montgomery (So.)	**2**	**Mike Warren (Jr.)**	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	58	J.D. Waggoner (Sr.)	89	Matt Leo (Jr.)
NG	76	Ray Lima (So.)	92	Jamahl Johnson (So.)
DT		Kamilo Tongamoa (Jr.)	99	Vernell Trent (Sr.)
LEO	**19**	**JaQuan Bailey (So.)**	46	Spencer Benton (Jr.)
WLB	**7**	**Willie Harvey (Jr.)**	9	Reggan Northrup (Jr.)
MLB		Joel Lanning (Sr.)	43	Tymar Sutton (Fr.)
STAR	4	Evrett Edwards (Sr.)	1	D'Andre Payne (Jr.)
CB	**1**	**D'Andre Payne (Jr.)**	32	Arnold Azunna (Fr.)
CB	**10**	**Brian Peavy (Jr.)**	21	Jatairis Grant (Fr.)
FS	**5**	**Kamari Cotton-Moya (Sr.)**	6	De'Monte Ruth (Jr.)
SS	23	Thadd Daniels (Sr.)	33	Braxton Lewis (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	21	Garrett Owens (Sr.)	KR	19	Trever Ryen (Sr.)
P	13	Colin Downing (Sr.)	PR	19	Trever Ryen (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jacob Park, 225-133-1,791-5, 12 TDs
Rushing: David Montgomery, 109 att., 563 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Allen Lazard, 69 rec., 1,018 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Willie Harvey, 78
Sacks: JaQuan Bailey, 3.5
Interceptions: Kamari Cotton-Moya, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Matt Campbell
Record at School: 3-9 (1 year)
Career Record: 38-24 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tom Manning
Defensive Coordinator: Jon Heacock
Ames, IA • Jack Trice Stadium (61,500)

Tim Umphrey

KANSAS JAYHAWKS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **89** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **10** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 0-9 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	SE Missouri State	
Sept. 9	Central Michigan	
Sept. 16	at Ohio	
Sept. 23	West Virginia	
Oct. 7	Texas Tech	
Oct. 14	at Iowa State	
Oct. 21	at TCU	
Oct. 28	Kansas State	
Nov. 4	Baylor	
Nov. 11	at Texas	
Nov. 18	Oklahoma	
Nov. 25	at Oklahoma State	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 2-10, 1-8 BIG 12

Sept. 3	Rhode Island		W	55-6
Sept. 10	Ohio		L	21-37
Sept. 17	at Memphis		L	7-43
Sept. 29	at Texas Tech		L	19-55
Oct. 8	TCU		L	23-24
Oct. 15	at Baylor		L	7-49
Oct. 22	Oklahoma State		L	20-44
Oct. 29	at Oklahoma		L	3-56
Nov. 5	at West Virginia		L	21-48
Nov. 12	Iowa State		L	24-31
Nov. 19	Texas	(ot)	W	24-21
Nov. 26	at Kansas State		L	19-34

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Octavius Matthews, RB, Stevenson, AL*
2. Dom Williams, RB, McKinney, TX
3. Travis Jordan, WR, Marrero, LA
4. Hasan Defense, CB, St. Augustine, FL*
5. Willie McCaleb, DL, Grenada, MS*
6. J.J. Holmes, DT, Chipley, FL*
7. Peyton Bender, QB, Fort Lauderdale, FL*
8. Kerr Johnson Jr., WR, Sebastopol, CA*
9. Kyron Johnson, LB, Arlington, TX
10. Shakial Taylor, CB, Lakeland, FL*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.3 ppg	10	120
Rushing	119.1 ypg	9	116
Passing	240.4 ypg	9	59
Total	359.5 ypg	10	106
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	37.3 ppg	9	114
Rushing	236.4 ypg	9	114
Passing	219.8 ypg	1	54
Total	456.2 ypg	9	109
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-14	-1.17	10	123

STAT CORNER

41

The Jayhawks' 41-game road losing streak is the second-longest such streak in Division I history according to Sports-Reference.com. KU's last road win came Sept. 12, 2009, against UTEP.

OFFENSE Like the previous two seasons under coach David Beaty, Kansas will head into fall practices with the quarterback position unsettled. Incumbent Carter Stanley, a sophomore, started KU's final three games in 2016, showing poise and quick decision-making. Junior college transfer Peyton Bender, meanwhile, has drawn positive reviews from Beaty for his quick release and strong arm.

Though the Jayhawks lost dependable running back Ke'aun Kinner to graduation, they still have some high-upside players with speed. That includes Khalil Herbert, who had his true freshman season sidetracked by a foot injury. Sophomore Taylor Martin, known for his straight-line quickness, also returns after ranking second on the team with 91 carries. Two newcomers also could see early playing time: Rivals' top-ranked junior college running back Octavius Matthews and three-star high-school recruit Dom Williams.

KU had a receiver resurgence in 2016, as two players eclipsed the 600-yard mark after no Jayhawk had done that in the previous six seasons. Both return for 2017. Steven Sims Jr. (859 yards) had the biggest breakout, leading the Jayhawks in receiving while also pulling down a team-best seven touchdowns. Texas A&M transfer LaQuvionte Gonzalez (729 yards) also put up solid numbers, though some of his production was marred by a season-long issue with fumbles.

Four linemen who started at least six games return. The group is led by left tackle Hakeem Adeniji, who was named All-Big 12 honorable mention by the coaches after playing undersized as a true freshman last season.

DEFENSE Beaty expects much of the defensive leadership to come from his front four, and it's not difficult to see why. Junior Dorance Armstrong Jr. returns following a 10-sack season, as does Daniel Wise, who was a first-team All-Big 12 selection by Pro Football Focus.

KU will get an immediate boost at linebacker with the return of Joe Dineen Jr., a Lawrence native and team captain whose season was cut short in 2016 because of a hamstring injury. Beaty has previously referred to Dineen as the "heart of the defense."

Beaty's biggest concern is the secondary, as the team lost four starters to graduation with few players returning who have Big 12 experience. Mike Lee is the exception, as the hard-hitting safety earned Freshman All-America honors after notching 77 tackles. Junior college transfer Hasan Defense should step into one starting cornerback spot, while sophomores Kyle Mayberry (cornerback) and Bryce Torneden (safety) are likely to have expanded roles.

SPECIALISTS KU received an unexpected lift last season from Cole Moos, who averaged 41 yards per punt. He'll return for his senior season, while Beaty gave a scholarship to incoming freshman Liam Jones with hopes that he could start at kicker the next four seasons. The Jayhawks desperately need improvement on punt returns, finishing last season with negative-10 return yards and four fumbles lost.

FINAL ANALYSIS KU athletic director Sheahon Zenger understands that his offseason contract extension and raise for Beaty — 2–22 in his first two seasons — will look questionable to some. Beaty's pay raise — he went from $800,000 annually to $1.6 million in 2017, with a $100,000 bump each season — is further proof, however, that Zenger sees progress outside the team's wins and losses. Beaty has improved the team's roster numbers after a scholarship crunch his first season and also built up some positive recruiting vibes. In 2016, bowl eligibility is unlikely given that the rebuild is still in its early stages, but improving on a two-win season should be an expectation, especially after Zenger gave Beaty the offseason vote of confidence.



DORANCE ARMSTRONG JR.

Tim Umphrey

"(Offensive coordinator Doug) Meacham is a great fit there. He'll definitely be a good addition. He'll have some ideas and do some neat things."
– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	1	**LaQuvionte Gonzalez (Sr.)**	5	**Bobby Hartzog Jr. (Sr.)**	
WR	2	Daylon Charlot (So.)	88	Jeremiah Booker (Jr.)	
WR	11	**Steven Sims Jr. (Jr.)**	33	Ryan Schadler (Jr.)	
LT	78	**Hakeem Adeniji (So.)**	75	Antione Frazier (So.)	
LG	65	**Jayson Rhodes (Sr.)**	55	Jacob Bragg (Jr.)	
C	69	**Mesa Ribordy (So.)**	77	Joe Gibson (Sr.)	
RG	73	Larry Hughes (Jr.)	61	Malik Clark (So.)	
RT	72	Charles Baldwin (Jr.)	71	Cam Durley (So.)	
TE	84	Ben Johnson (Sr.)	17	Kenyon Tabor (Fr.)	
QB	7	Peyton Bender (Jr.)	9	Carter Stanley (So.)	
RB	10	Khalil Herbert (So.)		Octavius Matthews (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	44	Willie McCaleb (Jr.)	19	Isaiah Bean (So.)
DT	99	**Deelsaac Davis (Sr.)**	88	J.J. Holmes (Jr.)
DT	96	**Daniel Wise (Jr.)**	97	Kellen Ash (Sr.)
DE	2	**Dorance Armstrong Jr. (Jr.)**	17	Josh Ehambe (Jr.)
LB	33	Keith Loneker Jr. (Jr.)	31	Osaze Ogbebor (Jr.)
LB	29	Joe Dineen Jr. (Jr.)	18	Denzel Feaster (Jr.)
NB	7	Derrick Neal (Sr.)	12	Bryce Torneden (So.)
CB	3	Hasan Defense (So.)	15	Shola Ayinde (Fr.)
CB	16	Kyle Mayberry (So.)	25	Julian Chandler (So.)
FS	22	Tyrone Miller Jr. (Jr.)	12	Bryce Torneden (So.)
SS	11	**Mike Lee (So.)**	4	Shaquille Richmond (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Liam Jones (Fr.)	**KR**	33	Ryan Schadler (Jr.)
P	36	Cole Moos (Sr.)	**PR**	2	Daylon Charlot (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Carter Stanley, 156-93-959-6, 6 TDs
Rushing: Taylor Martin, 91 att., 324 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Steven Sims Jr., 72 rec., 859 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Mike Lee, 77
Sacks: Dorance Armstrong Jr., 10.0
Interceptions: Mike Lee, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: David Beaty
Record at School: 2-22 (2 years)
Career Record: 2-22 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Doug Meacham
Defensive Coordinators: Clint Bowen, Kenny Perry
Lawrence, KS • Memorial Stadium (50,071)

KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **22** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 5-4 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Central Arkansas
Sept.	9	Charlotte
Sept.	16	at Vanderbilt
Sept.	30	Baylor
Oct.	7	at Texas
Oct.	14	TCU
Oct.	21	Oklahoma
Oct.	28	at Kansas
Nov.	4	at Texas Tech
Nov.	11	West Virginia
Nov.	18	at Oklahoma State
Nov.	25	Iowa State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 6-3 BIG 12

Sept.	2	at Stanford	L	13-26
Sept.	17	Florida Atlantic	W	63-7
Sept.	24	Missouri State	W	35-0
Oct.	1	at West Virginia	L	16-17
Oct.	8	Texas Tech	W	44-38
Oct.	15	at Oklahoma	L	17-38
Oct.	22	Texas	W	24-21
Oct.	29	at Iowa State	W	31-26
Nov.	5	Oklahoma State	L	37-43
Nov.	19	at Baylor	W	42-21
Nov.	26	Kansas	W	34-19
Dec.	3	at TCU	W	30-6
Dec.	28	vs. Texas A&M #	W	33-28

#Texas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Daniel Green, LB, Portland, OR
2. Elijah Walker, DB, Long Beach, CA*
3. Anthony Payne, DE, Peculiar, MO
4. Wyatt Hubert, DE, Topeka, KS
5. Joshua Brown, DB, Fairburn, GA
6. Josh Rivas, OL, Hutchinson, KS*
7. Eli Huggins, DT, Cumming, GA
8. Gervarrius Owens, DB, Moore, OK
9. Danny Walker, LB, Wheaton, IL
10. Bernard Goodwater, RB, Dallas, TX

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.2 ppg	5	45
Rushing	231.8 ypg	4	22
Passing	157.0 ypg	10	116
Total	388.8 ypg	9	83
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.3 ppg	1	25
Rushing	115.0 ypg	1	11
Passing	272.7 ypg	9	114
Total	387.7 ypg	1	51
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
+13	+1.00	1	4

STAT CORNER

8.1

KSU averaged 8.1 rushes of 10-plus yards per game, ninth in the country and 3.5 more such rushes per game than the Wildcats had in 2015.

OFFENSE Kansas State enters the 2017 season without a hint of mystery at quarterback, which is just how Bill Snyder likes it. Jesse Ertz is coming off an impressive season in which he led the Wildcats to a 9–4 record while throwing for 1,755 yards and nine touchdowns and also running for 1,012 yards and 12 touchdowns. Snyder typically has his best success with quarterbacks he trusts, and that's what he has in Ertz, who underwent surgery on his throwing shoulder to repair an injury he sustained midway through last season. He showed he was a skilled and physical runner as a junior. If he can stay healthy and improve on his 57.6 completion percentage, he could become one of the top quarterbacks in the Big 12.

Deciphering K-State's running back rotation won't be so easy, but that's a good challenge for coaches to have. Charles Jones was usually the starter but never the top runner. The Wildcats have never appeared deeper at running back. With Alex Barnes and Justin Silmon leading the way, K-State will have a versatile backfield. Barnes was electric during his debut season, averaging 7.9 yards per rush without losing yardage on 56 carries. Silmon was impressive, too, rushing for 464 yards and three touchdowns on 86 attempts. They could form a dynamic backfield duo, with Barnes doing most of his damage between the tackles and Silmon bouncing outside. But fullback Winston Dimel and scatback Dalvin Warmack will still get touches. They should all have room to run behind an offensive line that returns three starters, including right tackle Dalton Risner.

With versatile playmaker Byron Pringle and speedster Dominique Heath back at receiver, along with Cal transfer Carlos Strickland and a handful of up-and-coming deep threats, this has the makings of K-State's best offense in years.

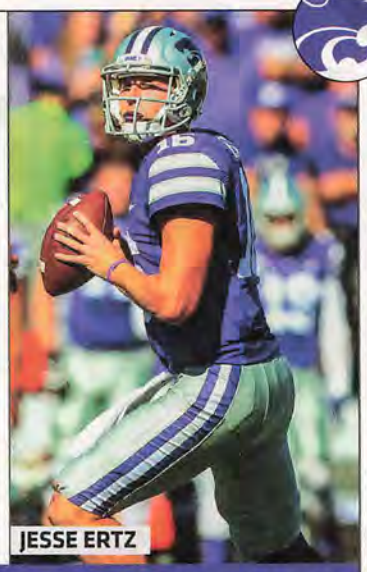
DEFENSE How do you replace an elite pass rusher like Jordan Willis? The Wildcats are about to find out. Willis, a do-everything star at defensive end last season, was K-State's biggest loss of the offseason. Good thing it has some talent returning on the defensive line. Reggie Walker will try to fill the void after recording 39 tackles and 6.5 sacks as a freshman. Tanner Wood will complement him on the other end. Will Geary and Trey Dishon will lead the way on the inside.

The Wildcats will look different in the middle. K-State's top three linebackers last season (Elijah Lee, Charmeachelle Moore, Will Davis) have all moved on, leaving an abundance of playing time. Former walk-on Trent Tanking seems poised to step into a leadership role at the position. Da'Quan Patton, a junior college transfer, also appears ready to push for a starting spot with Sam Sizelove, Elijah Sullivan and Jayd Kirby also in the mix.

K-State will have experience in its secondary with D.J. Reed and Duke Shelley back at corner and Kendall Adams returning at safety. Dante Barnett and Donnie Starks will need to be replaced. Returning safeties Sean Newlan and Denzel Goolsby will both get a shot at those positions, but junior college transfer Elijah Walker could also play immediately.

SPECIALISTS Reliable specialists Matthew McCrane (kicker) and Nick Walsh (punter) are both back and figure to pick up where they left off. Pringle and Heath both returned kicks for touchdowns last season and should once again be dangerous in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Wildcats will have serious experience and firepower on offense this season. If they can develop a few players on defense and improve against the pass, they could be one of the Big 12's biggest threats to dethrone Oklahoma.



JESSE ERTZ

"They were a totally different team in the second half of the season, and that momentum should carry over for this year."

– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	9	**Byron Pringle (Jr.)**	21	Carlos Strickland (So.)
WR	4	Dominique Heath (Jr.)	7	Isaiah Zuber (So.)
LT	74	**Scott Frantz (So.)**	73	Alec Ruth (Jr.)
LG	61	Abdul Beecham (Jr.)	79	Adam Holtorf (So.)
C	67	**Reid Najvar (Sr.)**	64	Glenn Williams (So.)
RG	62	Tyler Mitchell (So.)	75	Dylan Couch (Fr.)
RT	71	**Dalton Risner (Jr.)**	78	Bryce Fitzner (Jr.)
TE	88	**Dayton Valentine (Jr.)**	89	Blaise Gammon (So.)
QB	16	**Jesse Ertz (Sr.)**	5	Alex Delton (So.)
RB	34	Alex Barnes (So.)	32	Justin Silmon (Jr.)
FB	38	**Winston Dimel (Jr.)**	48	Konnor Cook (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	51	**Reggie Walker (So.)**	81	Wyatt Hubert (Fr.)
DT	60	**Will Geary (Sr.)**	95	Ray Price (Sr.)
DT	99	**Trey Dishon (So.)**	91	Mitch Copeland (Jr.)
DE	34	Tanner Wood (Sr.)	44	Kyle Ball (So.)
LB	58	Trent Tanking (Sr.)	41	Sam Sizelove (Jr.)
LB	5	Da'Quan Patton (Jr.)	46	Jayd Kirby (Sr.)
NB		Elijah Walker (Jr.)	23	Cre Moore (Sr.)
CB	2	**D.J. Reed (Jr.)**	18	Brogan Barry (Sr.)
CB	8	**Duke Shelley (Jr.)**	4	Jordan Noil (Jr.)
S	21	**Kendall Adams (Jr.)**	15	Walter Neil (Fr.)
S	29	Sean Newlan (Sr.)	20	Denzel Goolsby (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	16	Matthew McCrane (Sr.)	KR	9	Byron Pringle (Jr.)
P	14	Nick Walsh (Sr.)	PR	4	Dominique Heath (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jesse Ertz, 264-152-1,755-4, 9 TDs
Rushing: Jesse Ertz, 183 att., 1,012 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Dominique Heath, 45 rec., 438 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: D.J. Reed, 75
Sacks: Reggie Walker, 6.5
Interceptions: Duke Shelley, 3; D.J. Reed, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bill Snyder
Record at School: 202-105-1 (25 years)
Career Record: 202-105-1 (25 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Dana Dimel
Defensive Coordinator: Tom Hayes
Manhattan, KS • Bill Snyder Family Stadium (50,000)

Tim Umphrey

OKLAHOMA SOONERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **8** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **11-2, 8-1 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	UTEP	
Sept. 9	at Ohio State	
Sept. 16	Tulane	
Sept. 23	at Baylor	
Oct. 7	Iowa State	
Oct. 14	vs. Texas #	
Oct. 21	at Kansas State	
Oct. 28	Texas Tech	
Nov. 4	at Oklahoma State	
Nov. 11	TCU	
Nov. 18	at Kansas	
Nov. 25	West Virginia	

#Dallas, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-2, 9-0 BIG 12

Sept. 3	at Houston	L	23-33
Sept. 10	ULM	W	59-17
Sept. 17	Ohio State	L	24-45
Oct. 1	at TCU	W	52-46
Oct. 8	vs. Texas #	W	45-40
Oct. 15	Kansas State	W	38-17
Oct. 22	at Texas Tech	W	66-59
Oct. 29	Kansas	W	56-3
Nov. 3	at Iowa State	W	34-24
Nov. 12	Baylor	W	45-24
Nov. 19	at West Virginia	W	56-28
Dec. 3	Oklahoma State	W	38-20
Jan. 2	vs. Auburn %	W	35-19

#Dallas %Sugar Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Justin Broiles, DB, Oklahoma City, OK
2. Robert Barnes, DB, Southlake, TX
3. Tyrese Robinson, OL, McKinney, TX
4. Levi Draper, LB, Collinsville, OK
5. Addison Gumbs, LB, Hayward, CA
6. Tre Brown, DB, Tulsa OK
7. CeeDee Lamb, WR, Richmond, TX
8. Charleston Rambo, WR, Cedar Hill, TX
9. Chris Robison, QB, Mesquite, TX
10. Trey Sermon, RB, Marietta, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	43.9 ppg	1	3
Rushing	236.8 ypg	3	18
Passing	318.0 ypg	3	12
Total	554.8 ypg	2	2
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.8 ppg	5	68
Rushing	162.6 ypg	2	55
Passing	269.4 ypg	8	111
Total	432.0 ypg	5	82
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
0	0.00	4	67

STAT CORNER

7.5

Only two power conference offenses averaged above 7.0 yards per play in 2016: Louisville (7.2) and Baker Mayfield's OU (7.5).

OFFENSE Baker Mayfield leads this Oklahoma team on the latest quest to meet the only acceptable preseason goal for any respectable Sooner player, coach or fan: an eighth national championship. Never mind that the Sooners suffered significant personnel and production hits. It's always about the reload and never a rebuild in Norman.

So, yes, stars Joe Mixon, Samaje Perine and Dede Westbrook are gone, along with their combined 2,435 rushing yards and 2,168 receiving yards. Still, Mayfield is back, determined to maintain Sooner standards. "It's up to me to make the most of my senior year," Mayfield says. "This is my team and that's the mindset I'm going to carry. One final run at the school that I love."

Mayfield isn't the only key player back, as the Sooners return all five offensive line starters and pass-catching tight end Mark Andrews to go with the next wave of playmakers.

The running back competition could involve as many as six players, although former four-star recruits Abdul Adams and Rodney Anderson head into fall as the frontrunners.

There's a search among veterans and newcomers for reliable receiving options alongside the big-play Andrews, who also lines up in the slot. Kentucky graduate transfer Jeff Badet could be a major wild card after totaling 82 catches, 1,385 yards and seven touchdowns in three seasons with the Wildcats.

DEFENSE Inexperience creates some concern among the front seven, yet there's comfort in knowing a strong secondary has their backs. Jordan Thomas and Jordan Parker may be the best set of corners in the conference, providing Oklahoma with a luxury in a league loaded with spread passing attacks. Thomas is a star, controlling one side of the field as a physical cover corner who discourages throws his way. Steven Parker returns as a fixture at strong safety, carrying 30 career starts into this season.

The Sooners are moving toward more four-man fronts, an old-school approach to creating more quarterback pressure. It's a shift that may also be necessary with the lack of a dominant figure in the trenches.

Veteran tackle Matt Romar fills one of the interior spots, while Neville Gallimore looks to make the move inside after working at end in Oklahoma's old 3-4. D.J. Ward could thrive as an edge rusher in the new look.

Ogbonnia Okoronkwo and Caleb Kelly return as outside linebackers and flank redshirt freshman Jon-Michael Terry in the middle. Okoronkwo brings an attacking style, reflected in a team-leading nine sacks and 12 tackles for a loss.

SPECIALISTS Austin Seibert operates as the busiest man on special teams, handling punting, placekicking and kickoff duties. He's solid in all areas, although inconsistency has plagued his work on field goals. The Sooners must replace two dynamic return men in Mixon and Westbrook. Anderson and Mykel Jones will get first crack at the runbacks.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Sooners enter 2017 as the favorites to win a third straight Big 12 championship. Still, the push is for much more. Mayfield and the standout offensive line give them a shot, although reliable weapons must develop, and the defense must prove capable.

And there's another potential problem area: a challenging road schedule that features a Sept. 9 visit to Columbus to meet an Ohio State team that thumped Oklahoma in Norman in 2016. And there are trips to Kansas State and Oklahoma State, two of the other top contenders in the Big 12. And, if all goes well, there's a rematch with someone in the resurrected Big 12 Championship Game.

And then something bigger? "The ultimate goal is to play for a national championship," Mayfield says.



BAKER MAYFIELD

"I don't see a whole lot of changes. They're a team that has a chance to get into the Playoff if they win the games they're supposed to win."

– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	15	**Jeffery Mead (Sr.)**	2	Dahu Green (Jr.)	
WR		Jeff Badet (Sr.)	83	Nick Basquine (Jr.)	
LT	78	**Orlando Brown (Jr.)**	73	Quinn Mittermeier (Jr.)	
LG	72	**Ben Powers (Jr.)**	74	Cody Ford (So.)	
C	58	**Erick Wren (Sr.)**	68	Jonathan Alvarez (Sr.)	
RG	75	**Dru Samia (Jr.)**	63	Alex Dalton (Jr.)	
RT	71	**Bobby Evans (So.)**	75	Dru Samia (Jr.)	
TE	81	**Mark Andrews (Jr.)**	80	Grant Calcaterra (Fr.)	
QB	6	**Baker Mayfield (Sr.)**	1	Kyler Murray (So.)	
RB	23	Abdul Adams (So.)	24	Rodney Anderson (So.)	
FB	36	**Dimitri Flowers (Sr.)**	45	Carson Meier (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	87	D.J. Ward (Sr.)	50	Arthur McGinnis (So.)	
DT	92	Matt Romar (Sr.)	57	Du'Vonta Lampkin (So.)	
DT	90	Neville Gallimore (So.)	98	Marquise Overton (Jr.)	
DE	42	Mark Jackson Jr. (So.)	55	Kenneth Mann (So.)	
OLB	31	**Ogbonnia Okoronkwo (Sr.)**	9	Kenneth Murray (Fr.)	
ILB	40	Jon-Michael Terry (Fr.)	14	**Emmanuel Beal (Sr.)**	
OLB	19	**Caleb Kelly (So.)**	15	Addison Gumbs (Fr.)	
CB	7	**Jordan Thomas (Sr.)**	11	Parnell Motley (So.)	
CB	1	**Jordan Parker (So.)**	25	Justin Broiles (Fr.)	
FS	21	Will Sunderland (Jr.)	8	Kahlil Haughton (Jr.)	
SS	10	**Steven Parker (Sr.)**	28	Chanse Sylvie (So.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Austin Seibert (Jr.)	KR	3	Mykel Jones (So.)
P	43	Austin Seibert (Jr.)	PR	3	Mykel Jones (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Baker Mayfield, 358-254-3,965-8, 40 TDs
Rushing: Abdul Adams, 53 att., 283 yds., 0 TDs
Receiving: Mark Andrews, 31 rec., 489 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Emmanuel Beal, 81
Sacks: Ogbonnia Okoronkwo, 9.0
Interceptions: Steven Parker, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bob Stoops
Record at School: 190-48 (18 years)
Career Record: 190-48 (18 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Lincoln Riley
Defensive Coordinator: Mike Stoops
Norman, OK • Oklahoma Memorial Stadium (84,389)

Chris Covatta

OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **14** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-3, 6-3 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Tulsa
Sept.	9	at South Alabama
Sept.	16	at Pittsburgh
Sept.	23	TCU
Sept.	30	at Texas Tech
Oct.	14	Baylor
Oct.	21	at Texas
Oct.	28	at West Virginia
Nov.	4	Oklahoma
Nov.	11	at Iowa State
Nov.	18	Kansas State
Nov.	25	Kansas

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 7-1 BIG 12

Sept.	3	SE Louisiana	W	61-7
Sept.	10	Central Michigan	L	27-30
Sept.	17	Pittsburgh	W	45-38
Sept.	24	at Baylor	L	24-35
Oct.	1	Texas	W	49-31
Oct.	8	Iowa State	W	38-31
Oct.	22	at Kansas	W	44-20
Oct.	29	West Virginia	W	37-20
Nov.	5	at Kansas State	W	43-37
Nov.	12	Texas Tech	W	45-44
Nov.	19	at TCU	W	31-6
Dec.	3	at Oklahoma	L	20-38
Dec.	29	vs. Colorado #	W	38-8

#Alamo Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tylan Wallace, WR, Fort Worth, TX
2. LC Greenwood, WR, Garland, TX
3. Chuba Hubbard, RB, Sherwood Park, AB, Canada
4. Patrick Macon, LB, Memphis, TN*
5. Lamarcus Morton, CB, Gilmer, TX
6. Tracin Wallace, QB, Fort Worth, TX
7. Jelani Woods, QB, Ellenwood, GA
8. Kris McCune, S, Forney, TX
9. Brendan Vaughn, LB, Forney, TX
10. J.D. King, RB, Fitzgerald, GA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.6 ppg	3	17
Rushing	170.8 ypg	7	68
Passing	323.9 ypg	2	9
Total	494.8 ypg	4	14
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.5 ppg	3	53
Rushing	193.5 ypg	6	82
Passing	252.8 ypg	5	98
Total	446.3 ypg	6	92
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.85	2	10

STAT CORNER

+8.8

Almost no one tilted the field like the Pokes. OSU had a plus-8.8 yard field position margin per drive, second in the country.

OFFENSE Quarterback Mason Rudolph considered a jump to the NFL following last season but returned, giving Oklahoma State a premium triggerman for what should be an electric attack that feeds optimism for a special season.

The Cowboys return seven starters on offense, none more important than Rudolph, who enters 2017 as the nation's No. 2 active leader in career passing yards per game (300.5), boosted by last year's total of 4,091 yards, with 28 touchdowns against four interceptions.

And Rudolph has weapons in waves, led by game-breaking receiver James Washington, whose 19.4 yards per catch in 2016 led all FBS receivers with at least 70 receptions. Washington, with 26 touchdown catches through three seasons, leads all active Power 5 conference receivers with 2,923 career yards.

Beyond Washington, Jalen McCleskey and Marcell Ateman are multi-year starters with a combined 15 career touchdown receptions, while Chris Lacy starred in place of the injured Ateman last fall and produced both in the passing game and as a devastating downfield blocker. Then there's Tyron Johnson, an LSU transfer and former five-star recruit who wowed coaches as a playmaker in the spring. "It's pick your poison," Washington says.

Running back Justice Hill returns after rushing for 1,142 yards, topping all FBS freshmen and earning Big 12 Offensive Freshman of the Year and consensus Freshman All-America honors. Three starters are back on the offensive line.

DEFENSE There are significant holes to fill on defense, yet premium pieces and athleticism, too, leading Cowboys coach Mike Gundy to suggest that this could be one of the better defenses of his tenure.

The defensive line should be a strength, with an abundance of quality ends, including all-conference candidates Jarrell Owens and Jordan Brailford. Darrion Daniels, entering his junior year, showed in the spring that he could be ready for a major breakout.

Smart and savvy linebacker Chad Whitener enters his third season as a starter, and safety Tre Flowers is a rangy playmaker with 200 tackles and 17 pass breakups in his career. Ramon Richards, who's started 23 games at cornerback, shifts to the other safety, leaving a cast of young and talented — yet inexperienced — players bidding to fill both corner spots. The scenario is similar on both sides of Whitener at linebacker. The overall success of the defense hinges on the development of the next men up.

SPECIALISTS Punter Zach Sinor is a weapon, flipping field position both with length and an ability to pin opponents deep. The Cowboys ranked No. 1 nationally a year ago in opponent starting field position. A new kicker is needed, with Matt Ammendola set to battle incoming scholarship freshman Jake McClure. A boost in the return game is also needed, and Johnson may provide it.

FINAL ANALYSIS There are a lot of optimistic references to 2011 in Stillwater, with the look of this team bearing an obvious resemblance to that squad — at least on paper — with the array of offensive playmakers and the promise of an opportunistic defense.

Now, can it look and perform like that squad, which won the Big 12 and finished decimal points out of the national championship game?

The Cowboys will have to manage trips to Pittsburgh and West Virginia, but the rest of the schedule sets up nicely. And they'll have to find a way to beat Oklahoma, which has blocked their path the past two seasons. "That's all we talk about around here," Rudolph says. "That's all we're focused on. So, yeah, that's a goal, the goal."



MASON RUDOLPH

"They used to be really bad on the offensive line. Now they're real solid up front, and that makes them a much more formidable football team."
– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	28	**James Washington (Sr.)**	10	Tyrell Alexander (Fr.)
WR	3	Marcell Ateman (Sr.)	15	Chris Lacy (Sr.)
WR	1	**Jalen McCleskey (Jr.)**	17	Dillon Stoner (Fr.)
WR	13	Tyron Johnson (So.)		Tylan Wallace (Fr.)
LT		Aaron Cochran (Sr.)	67	Shane Richards (Sr.)
LG	75	**Marcus Keyes (So.)**	51	Arlington Hambright (Jr.)
C	71	**Brad Lundblade (Sr.)**	72	Johnny Wilson (So.)
RG	56	Larry Williams (Sr.)	79	Matt Kegel (Fr.)
RT	60	**Zach Crabtree (Sr.)**	76	Dylan Galloway (Fr.)
QB	2	**Mason Rudolph (Sr.)**	11	Keondre Wudtee (Fr.)
RB	5	**Justice Hill (So.)**		Chuba Hubbard (Fr.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	93	**Jarrell Owens (Jr.)**	89	Tralund Webber (Sr.)
DT	99	Trey Carter (Jr.)	91	DeQuinton Osborne (Sr.)
DT	79	Darrion Daniels (Jr.)	90	Taaj Bakari (So.)
DE	94	Jordan Brailford (Jr.)	82	**Cole Walterscheid (Jr.)**
LB	12	Kirk Tucker (Sr.)	1	Calvin Bundage (So.)
LB	45	**Chad Whitener (Sr.)**	33	Kevin Henry (So.)
LB	19	Justin Phillips (Jr.)	3	Kenneth Edison-McGruder (Jr.)
CB	4	A.J. Green (So.)		Adrian Baker (Sr.)
CB	25	Madre Harper (So.)	8	Rodarius Williams (Fr.)
SS	31	**Tre Flowers (Sr.)**	5	Jerel Morrow (Sr.)
FS	7	**Ramon Richards (Sr.)**	18	Za'Carrius Green (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	49	Matt Ammendola (So.)	KR	13	Tyron Johnson (So.)
P	29	Zach Sinor (Jr.)	PR	1	Jalen McCleskey (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Mason Rudolph, 448-284-4,091-4, 28 TDs
Rushing: Justice Hill, 206 att., 1,142 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Jalen McCleskey, 73 rec., 812 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Chad Whitener, 71
Sacks: Tralund Webber, 6.0
Interceptions: Ramon Richards, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Gundy
Record at School: 104-50 (12 years)
Career Record: 104-50 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Yurcich
Defensive Coordinator: Glenn Spencer
Stillwater, OK • Boone Pickens Stadium (60,218)

Tim Umphrey

TCU HORNED FROGS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **32** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-4 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Jackson State
Sept.	9	at Arkansas
Sept.	16	SMU
Sept.	23	at Oklahoma State
Oct.	7	West Virginia
Oct.	14	at Kansas State
Oct.	21	Kansas
Oct.	28	at Iowa State
Nov.	4	Texas
Nov.	11	at Oklahoma
Nov.	18	at Texas Tech
Nov.	24	Baylor

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 4-5 BIG 12

Sept.	3	South Dakota State	W	59-41
Sept.	10	Arkansas	(ot) L	38-41
Sept.	17	Iowa State	W	41-20
Sept.	23	at SMU	W	33-3
Oct.	1	Oklahoma	L	46-52
Oct.	8	at Kansas	W	24-23
Oct.	22	at West Virginia	L	10-34
Oct.	29	Texas Tech	(ot) L	24-27
Nov.	5	at Baylor	W	62-22
Nov.	19	Oklahoma State	L	6-31
Nov.	25	at Texas	W	31-9
Dec.	3	Kansas State	L	6-30
Dec.	30	vs. Georgia #	L	23-31

#Liberty Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jalen Reagor, WR, Waxahachie, TX
2. Omar Manning, WR, Lancaster, TX
3. Wes Harris, OL, Aledo, TX
4. Shawn Robinson, QB, DeSoto, TX
5. Corey Bethley, DL, Katy, TX
6. Dennis Collins, DL, West Monroe, LA
7. Michael Onyemaobi, DB, Temecula, CA
8. La'Kendrick Van Zandt, DB, Henderson, TX
9. Kenedy Snell, RB, Waxahachie, TX
10. Al'Dontre Davis, WR, Lutcher, LA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.0 ppg	8	52
Rushing	195.0 ypg	6	46
Passing	268.2 ypg	5	29
Total	463.2 ypg	7	29
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.0 ppg	4	64
Rushing	185.8 ypg	4	73
Passing	238.9 ypg	4	77
Total	424.8 ypg	2	73
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.31	7	90

STAT CORNER

5.5

After allowing 4.7 yards per play in 2014, TCU allowed 5.2 in 2015 and 5.5 in 2016. The Frogs' offense has far less margin for error now.

OFFENSE What a difference a change in quarterback made for TCU in 2016, and not in a good way. Kenny Hill could not match Trevone Boykin's production, and worse, he made more mistakes — a Big 12-leading 13 interceptions. The Horned Frogs went from a 23–3 run under Boykin to 6–7 in 2016. But Gary Patterson and the coaching staff did not put the blame entirely on Hill. He was dragged down by an inconsistent receiving corps that ran sloppy routes and inflicted 38 drops on Hill, more than any other quarterback in the country, according to a count by Pro Football Focus. On top of that, KaVontae Turpin missed five games with a knee injury, taking away a big-play threat from Hill for almost half the season.

The Frogs might also help their quarterback by slowing down the game a touch as Sonny Cumbie takes over play calling. He can turn to two versatile backs with receiver-type skills, Kyle Hicks and Shaun Nixon, and two more traditional backs, Darius Anderson and Sewo Olonilua. Hicks led the team in rushing and receptions a year ago, the first TCU back to do that since 1996. He is a strong runner with deceptive movement and strong acceleration, and Patterson called his route running "receiver quality" a year ago. Actually, TCU could use more receiver quality. Their leading wide receiver a year ago had 39 catches. Incoming four-star recruits Jalen Reagor and Omar Manning could find themselves playing early and playing a lot.

DEFENSE As he spends more time in the Big 12, it becomes more important to Patterson to add size to his defenses, which have traditionally relied on speed and quickness. Those remain valued traits, but the late-season hammerings by the mammoth lines of Kansas State and Oklahoma State drove home the point: Size matters in a Power 5 conference. It's why redshirt freshman Ross Blacklock (326 pounds), junior college transfer Ezra Tu'ua (315) and incoming freshman Corey Bethley (302) were important acquisitions.

The Frogs will break in a new crop of pass rushers following the departure of their two most accomplished ends from the past three seasons. ULM transfer Ben Banogu, sophomore Brandon Bowen and redshirt freshman Isaiah Chambers are untested but ooze talent.

Behind them, the Big 12's leading tackler, Travin Howard, returns off back-to-back 100-tackle seasons. He and veterans Montrel Wilson, Ty Summers and Sammy Douglas are back with a combined 10 seasons of experience.

Cornerbacks Ranthony Texada and Julius Lewis have 36 starts between them, and Jeff Gladney started eight games while Lewis recovered from an Achilles injury last season. Junior safety Niko Small began to emerge last season, and senior safety Nick Orr led the team in interceptions.

SPECIALISTS The Frogs missed Jaden Oberkrom a year ago. Ryan Graf and Brandon Hatfield were 18-for-25 on field goals in his place with critical misses against Arkansas and Texas Tech and in the Liberty Bowl against Georgia. They are back, but so is Jonathan Song, the projected 2016 starter who missed the season with a quadriceps injury, and transfer Andrew David for competition. Adam Nunez returns after a strong season at punter. There will be a new long snapper, likely transfer Lucas Gravelle.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Air Raid-based Frogs will go as far as their quarterback takes them. Improvement from Hill is a must if TCU wants to return to its winning ways, let alone compete for the Big 12 championship. There are tools to work with on offense, but the best of them may still be a year away from making a legitimate impact. At least Patterson is likely to put out a sound defense. Experience is on his side this year, and that typically has meant good things.



KYLE HICKS

"Gary (Patterson) wasn't happy with their defense or their offense last year, so I think you'll see some changes, but you're limited by your personnel."
– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	2	**Taj Williams (Sr.)**		Jalen Reagor (Fr.)
WR	25	KaVontae Turpin (Jr.)	10	Desmon White (Sr.)
WR	9	**John Diarse (Sr.)**	15	**Jaelan Austin (Jr.)**
WR	1	Emanuel Porter (Sr.)		Omar Manning (Fr.)
LT	68	**Joseph Noteboom (Sr.)**	62	David Bolisomi (So.)
LG	70	Cordel Iwuagwu (So.)	58	**Patrick Morris (Sr.)**
C	51	**Austin Schlottmann (Sr.)**	63	Garrett Altman (Sr.)
RG	64	**Matt Pryor (Sr.)**	74	Chris Gaynor (Sr.)
RT	77	Lucas Niang (So.)	76	Sam Awolope (So.)
QB	7	**Kenny Hill (Sr.)**	17	Grayson Muehlstein (Jr.)
RB	21	**Kyle Hicks (Sr.)**	6	Darius Anderson (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	41	Brandon Bowen (So.)	15	Ben Banogu (Jr.)
DT	56	**Chris Bradley (Sr.)**	90	Ross Blacklock (Fr.)
DT	54	Joseph Broadnax Jr. (Jr.)	91	L.J. Collier (Jr.)
DE	9	Mat Boesen (Sr.)	99	Isaiah Chambers (Fr.)
LB	19	Montrel Wilson (Jr.)	42	**Ty Summers (Jr.)**
LB	32	**Travin Howard (Sr.)**	35	Sammy Douglas (Sr.)
CB	11	**Ranthony Texada (Sr.)**		Noah Daniels (Fr.)
CB	24	Julius Lewis (Jr.)	12	**Jeff Gladney (So.)**
SS	31	Ridwan Issahaku (Jr.)	6	Innis Gaines (So.)
FS	2	**Niko Small (Jr.)**	3	Markell Simmons (Jr.)
WS	18	**Nick Orr (Sr.)**	26	Vernon Scott (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	27	Brandon Hatfield (Sr.)	KR	25	KaVontae Turpin (Jr.)
P	29	Adam Nunez (So.)	PR	25	KaVontae Turpin (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kenny Hill, 440-269-3,208-13, 17 TDs
Rushing: Kyle Hicks, 203 att., 1,042 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Kyle Hicks, 47 rec., 417 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Travin Howard, 130
Sacks: Mat Boesen, 6.0
Interceptions: Nick Orr, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Gary Patterson
Record at School: 149-54 (16 years)
Career Record: 149-54 (16 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Sonny Cumbie, Curtis Luper
Defensive Coordinator: Chad Glasgow
Fort Worth, TX • Amon G. Carter Stadium (45,000)

Tim Umphrey

TEXAS LONGHORNS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **13** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-4, 7-2 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Maryland
Sept.	9	San Jose State
Sept.	16	at USC
Sept.	28	at Iowa State
Oct.	7	Kansas State
Oct.	14	vs. Oklahoma #
Oct.	21	Oklahoma State
Oct.	28	at Baylor
Nov.	4	at TCU
Nov.	11	Kansas
Nov.	18	at West Virginia
Nov.	24	Texas Tech

#Dallas, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 3-6 BIG 12

Sept.	4	Notre Dame	(ot) W	50-47
Sept.	10	UTEP	W	41-7
Sept.	17	at California	L	43-50
Oct.	1	at Oklahoma State	L	31-49
Oct.	8	vs Oklahoma #	L	40-45
Oct.	15	Iowa State	W	27-6
Oct.	22	at Kansas State	L	21-24
Oct.	29	Baylor	W	35-34
Nov.	5	at Texas Tech	W	45-37
Nov.	12	West Virginia	L	20-24
Nov.	19	at Kansas	(ot) L	21-24
Nov.	25	TCU	L	9-31

#Dallas

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Sam Ehlinger, QB, Austin, TX
2. Damion Miller, WR, Tyler, TX
3. Toneil Carter, RB, Houston, TX
4. Gary Johnson, LB, Douglas, AL*
5. Taquon Graham, DE, Temple, TX
6. Montrell Estell, DB, Hooks, TX
7. Josh Thompson, DB, Nacogdoches, TX
8. Reese Leitao, TE, Jenks, OK
9. Marqez Bimage, LB, Brenham, TX
10. Kobe Boyce, DB, Corinth, TX

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.9 ppg	6	46
Rushing	239.3 ypg	2	17
Passing	252.0 ypg	8	50
Total	491.3 ypg	5	16
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.5 ppg	8	90
Rushing	189.8 ypg	5	76
Passing	258.5 ypg	7	105
Total	448.3 ypg	7	94
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.25	5	85

STAT CORNER

13.8

Big plays determined Texas' fate in 2016. In five wins, the Longhorns allowed 10.9 yards per completion. In seven losses: 13.8.

AP

OFFENSE Texas is on its sixth offensive coordinator in six years. Let that sink in for a second as you stop wondering why the Longhorns have been largely irrelevant in college football since 2009.

But now it's Tom Herman's offense (being run by coordinator Tim Beck). And if Herman's success as coordinator at Ohio State (a national title in 2014 with a third-string QB) and head coach at Houston (22–4 while averaging 38.2 points per game the past two seasons) is any indication, this could be a big year offensively for Texas.

The Longhorns have proven experience at quarterback (Shane Buechele), running back (Chris Warren III), receiver (Collin Johnson, Devin Duvernay, Armanti Foreman and Jerrod Heard) as well as an offensive line with four returning starters, including All-America left tackle Connor Williams.

Buechele took every rep with the first team in the spring game and clearly outpaced UT's only other scholarship QB — early enrollee freshman Sam Ehlinger. But Herman, relentlessly demanding as an offensive coordinator, was in no mood to anoint Buechele in April. "As far as Shane being the starter? No way," Herman said during spring practice.

The biggest concern for this offense will be staying healthy, because it is painfully thin at quarterback, tight end and at some spots on the offensive line.

DEFENSE Texas is coming off two of its worst defenses in school history under former coach Charlie Strong, giving up 30.3 points per game in 2015 and 31.5 in 2016. So, in a lot of ways, the 3-4 defense of UT's first $1 million D-coordinator Todd Orlando has nowhere to go but up.

Orlando is confident in his defensive line that features rising-star defensive end Malcolm Roach, strong-as-a-fire-hydrant nose tackle Poona Ford and gritty defensive end Chris Nelson.

Orlando loves the secondary, especially vocal, hard-hitting junior safety DeShon Elliott, blazing sophomore free safety Brandon Jones as well as junior, do-it-all nickel back P.J. Locke and physical junior cornerback Kris Boyd. The other cornerback spot features a battle of 6'3" juniors — Davante Davis and Holton Hill — who emerged as stars as freshmen, only to suffer sophomore slumps.

The biggest question mark may be at linebacker, where Orlando has a lot of talent to work with but just needs to put guys in the right roles.

SPECIALISTS Ray Guy Award finalist Michael Dickson returns at punter, and junior college transfer Joshua Rowland will handle the placekicking chores. The Longhorns struggled with both field goals and extra points last season. Receivers Foreman and Heard are leading candidates to return punts and kicks, respectively. The Longhorns have ranked ninth in the Big 12 in kickoff returns in each of the last four seasons and have not returned a kick for a touchdown since 2013.

FINAL ANALYSIS Herman is 22–4 as a head coach and is 6–0 against teams ranked in the AP top 25. He may also be a master of timing. At Houston, he took over a veteran team coming off an eight-win season and went 13–1 in his first year. Now, Herman takes over a Texas roster returning 37 of the 44 in the two-deep from last season, stocked with back-to-back top-10 recruiting classes under former coach Charlie Strong. On his way out, Strong said whoever was coaching the Longhorns in 2017 would win 10 games. Texas fans can't take any more hype, only to be let down again. But things may be set up for Texas and Herman to crash the Big 12 party this season thanks to UT's veteran roster, including experienced offensive and defensive lines and a laser-accurate quarterback.



CHRIS WARREN III

"On defense, there's no doubt in my mind they had more good players than they showed, but you've got to get them in the right system."
– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)					
WR	9	Collin Johnson (So.)	84	Lil'Jordan Humphrey (So.)	
WR	6	Devin Duvernay (So.)	**3**	**Armanti Foreman (Sr.)**	
WR	13	Jerrod Heard (Jr.)	1	John Burt (Jr.)	
LT	**55**	**Connor Williams (Jr.)**	74	Jean Delance (So.)	
LG	**77**	**Patrick Vahe (Jr.)**	63	Alex Anderson (Jr.)	
C	**56**	**Zach Shackelford (So.)**	51	Terrell Cuney (Jr.)	
RG	64	Jake McMillon (Jr.)	73	Patrick Hudson (Fr.)	
RT	78	Denzel Okafor (So.)	**58**	**Brandon Hodges (Sr.)**	
TE	47	Andrew Beck (Sr.)		Cade Brewer (Fr.)	
QB	**7**	**Shane Buechele (So.)**	11	Sam Ehlinger (Fr.)	
RB	25	Chris Warren III (Jr.)	21	Kyle Porter (So.)	
DEFENSE (10)					
DE	32	Malcolm Roach (So.)	98	D'Andre Christmas (So.)	
DT	**95**	**Poona Ford (Sr.)**	92	Jordan Elliott (So.)	
DE	**97**	**Chris Nelson (Jr.)**	**90**	**Charles Omenihu (Jr.)**	
OLB	44	Breckyn Hager (Jr.)	**40**	**Naashon Hughes (Sr.)**	
MLB	**45**	**Anthony Wheeler (Jr.)**	41	Erick Fowler (So.)	
ILB	**46**	**Malik Jefferson (Jr.)**	23	Jeffrey McCulloch (So.)	
NB	**11**	**P.J. Locke (Jr.)**	7	Antwuan Davis (Sr.)	
CB	**2**	**Kris Boyd (Jr.)**	26	Eric Cuffee (Fr.)	
CB	18	Davante Davis (Jr.)	5	Holton Hill (Jr.)	
SS	4	DeShon Elliott (Jr.)	**31**	**Jason Hall (Sr.)**	
FS	19	Brandon Jones (So.)	**24**	**John Bonney (Jr.)**	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	49	Joshua Rowland (Jr.)	KR	13	Jerrod Heard (Jr.)
P	37	Michael Dickson (Jr.)	PR	3	Armanti Foreman (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Shane Buechele, 391-236-2,958-11, 21 TDs
Rushing: Chris Warren III, 62 att., 366 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Armanti Foreman, 34 rec., 420 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Anthony Wheeler, 65
Sacks: Breckyn Hager, 6.0
Interceptions: Edwin Freeman, 2; P.J. Locke III, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tom Herman
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 22-4 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tim Beck
Defensive Coordinator: Todd Orlando
Austin, TX • Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium (100,119)

TEXAS TECH RED RAIDERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **64** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **9** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 3-6 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Eastern Washington	
Sept. 16	Arizona State	
Sept. 23	at Houston	
Sept. 30	Oklahoma State	
Oct. 7	at Kansas	
Oct. 14	at West Virginia	
Oct. 21	Iowa State	
Oct. 28	at Oklahoma	
Nov. 4	Kansas State	
Nov. 11	vs. Baylor #	
Nov. 18	TCU	
Nov. 24	at Texas	

#Arlington, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 3-6 BIG 12

Sept. 3	Stephen F. Austin	W	69-17
Sept. 10	at Arizona State	L	55-68
Sept. 17	Louisiana Tech	W	59-45
Sept. 29	Kansas	W	55-19
Oct. 8	at Kansas State	L	38-44
Oct. 15	at West Virginia	L	17-48
Oct. 22	Oklahoma	L	59-66
Oct. 29	at TCU (ot)	W	27-24
Nov. 5	Texas	L	37-45
Nov. 12	Oklahoma State	L	44-45
Nov. 19	at Iowa State	L	10-66
Nov. 25	vs. Baylor #	W	54-35

#Arlington

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jack Anderson, OL, Frisco, TX
2. Octavious Morgan, DB, Greenwood, SC*
3. Xavier Martin, QB, Cibolo, TX
4. Will Farrar, OL, Richmond, TX
5. Dawson Deaton, OL, Frisco, TX
6. Jaylon Lane, DB, Nacogdoches, TX*
7. Riko Jeffers, LB, Garland, TX
8. Nelson Mbanasor, DL, Pflugerville, TX
9. Dakota Allen, LB, Humble, TX*
10. Vaughnte Dorsey, DB, Cleveland, MS*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	43.7 ppg	2	5
Rushing	101.5 ypg	10	123
Passing	463.0 ypg	1	1
Total	564.5 ypg	1	1
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	43.5 ppg	10	128
Rushing	238.6 ypg	10	116
Passing	315.8 ypg	10	125
Total	554.3 ypg	10	128
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.33	8	93

STAT CORNER

-3.7

Tech's field position margin was minus-3.7 yards per drive, 110th in FBS and a direct effect of forcing few three-and-outs.

OFFENSE Senior Nic Shimonek, a 2014 transfer from Iowa, is the heir apparent to record-setting quarterback Patrick Mahomes. Shimonek is not as mobile as Mahomes, but he has the arm strength to make all the throws in this high-octane offense, and he has impressed his teammates with his leadership abilities. No other quarterback on the roster has taken a snap at the FBS level.

Texas Tech returns an embarrassment of riches at wide receiver, including last year's top four receivers — Jonathan Giles, Keke Coutee, Dylan Cantrell and Cameron Batson, who totaled 242 receptions, 3,367 yards and 36 touchdowns in 2016. The Red Raiders also have high hopes for senior Derrick Willies, a former junior college transfer who battled injuries last fall.

Poor play on the offensive line and a limited run game are deficiencies that must be addressed in 2017, although both the line and the running backs corps are still fairly young and inexperienced. Last year's total yards rushing (1,243) were less than half of the team's output in 2016 (2,487). The run game woes were a bit of an anomaly in the Kliff Kingsbury era, so expect at least slight improvement. Da'Leon Ward showed promise as a tailback as a true freshman, rushing for at least 80 yards in each of his last four games.

DEFENSE David Gibbs enters Year 3 of his tenure as defensive coordinator, the first man to achieve such longevity at Texas Tech since 2009. He has nowhere to go but up, as the Raiders finished last in the nation in both total defense and scoring defense.

There are signs of hope, though. Linebacker Jordyn Brooks recorded 86 tackles (5.0 for a loss) last year as a freshman, and he will be joined by Dakota Allen, one of Texas Tech's leading tacklers in 2015 who spent 2016 in the junior college ranks. The linebacking corps should be considered the strength of the defense.

The struggling secondary was reinforced — or at least that's the plan — with new talent by way of incoming freshmen and transfers. The porous defensive line returns Broderick Washington and Joe Wallace on the interior, both standouts as freshmen in 2016, and will add Eli Howard at end after he sat out a year as a transfer from North Texas. Someone needs to step up as a pass rusher; Texas Tech's pass rush was almost nonexistent in 2016, recording only 14 sacks in 12 games.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Clayton Hatfield has a career conversion rate of 90 percent (27-of-30) and will resume his duties in 2017. Batson has been returning punts and/or kicks since his freshman season and will continue to do so as a senior. Texas Tech struggled in the punting game last year, with multiple mishandlings of snaps and a poor net punt average. Junior college transfer Dominic Panazzolo and holdover Michael Barden figure to compete for the starting job.

FINAL ANALYSIS Texas Tech has a lot to prove in 2017. There are glaring weaknesses that need to be addressed — specifically the run game, offensive line and one of the worst defenses in college football. Even in an area where Texas Tech typically succeeds — throwing the football — the Raiders are tasked with replacing arguably the best quarterback in school history with a player who has never started at the collegiate level.

All of this uncertainty on the field will add to the uncertainty with the coaching staff. Kingsbury is back for the fifth season at his alma mater, but the former record-setting quarterback is no doubt in a precarious position. A 13–23 record in Big 12 games simply is not good enough.



JONATHAN GILES

"There's really no culture on their defense They've been great on offense and still not been a good football team. That's ridiculous."
– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	11	Derrick Willies (Sr.)	1	Quan Shorts (So.)	
WR	9	**Jonathan Giles (Jr.)**	13	**Cameron Batson (Sr.)**	
WR	20	Keke Coutee (Jr.)	19	Zach Austin (Sr.)	
WR	14	**Dylan Cantrell (Sr.)**	86	T.J. Vasher (Fr.)	
LT	79	Travis Bruffy (So.)	70	Zach Adams (Fr.)	
LG	58	**Madison Akamnonu (So.)**	71	Bailey Smith (So.)	
C	76	**Paul Stawarz (Jr.)**	51	**Tony Morales (Sr.)**	
RG	56	Jack Anderson (Fr.)	73	Dawson Deaton (Fr.)	
RT	78	**Terence Steele (So.)**	74	Will Farrar (Fr.)	
QB	16	Nic Shimonek (Sr.)	6	McLane Carter (So.)	
RB	32	Da'Leon Ward (So.)	4	Justin Stockton (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	53	Eli Howard (So.)	12	Zach Barnes (Sr.)	
DT	96	Broderick Washington (So.)	95	Talor Nunez (Sr.)	
NT	99	Mychealon Thomas (Sr.)	97	Joseph Wallace (So.)	
DE	13	**Kolin Hill (Jr.)**	94	Lonzell Gilmore (So.)	
MLB	20	**Jordyn Brooks (So.)**	34	D'Vonta Hinton (Jr.)	
WLB	40	Dakota Allen (Jr.)	9	Tony Jones (Jr.)	
NB	25	Douglas Coleman III (So.)	19	Willie Sykes (So.)	
CB	5	Octavious Morgan (Jr.)	22	Desmon Smith (So.)	
CB	3	**D.J. Polite-Bray (Sr.)**	28	Jaylon Lane (Jr.)	
FS	7	**Jah'Shawn Johnson (Jr.)**	24	Payton Hendrix (Jr.)	
SS	15	Vaughnte Dorsey (Jr.)	38	**Kisean Allen (Jr.)**	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	96	Clayton Hatfield (Jr.)	KR	13	Cameron Batson (Sr.)
P		Dominic Panazzolo (Jr.)	PR	20	Keke Coutee (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nic Shimonek, 58-38-464-1, 6 TDs
Rushing: Da'Leon Ward, 103 att., 428 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Jonathan Giles, 69 rec., 1,158 yds., 13 TDs
Tackles: Jordyn Brooks, 86
Sacks: Seven players tied with 1.0
Interceptions: Jah'Shawn Johnson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Kliff Kingsbury
Record at School: 24-26 (4 years)
Career Record: 24-26 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Eric Morris
Defensive Coordinator: David Gibbs
Lubbock, TX • Jones AT&T Stadium (60,454)

Tim Umphrey

WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **26** • BIG 12 PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-4 BIG 12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	vs. Virginia Tech #	
Sept. 9	East Carolina	
Sept. 16	Delaware State	
Sept. 23	at Kansas	
Oct. 7	at TCU	
Oct. 14	Texas Tech	
Oct. 21	at Baylor	
Oct. 28	Oklahoma State	
Nov. 4	Iowa State	
Nov. 11	at Kansas State	
Nov. 18	Texas	
Nov. 25	at Oklahoma	#Landover, MD

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 7-2 BIG 12

Sept. 3	Missouri	W	26-11
Sept. 10	at Youngstown State	W	38-21
Sept. 24	vs. BYU #	W	35-32
Oct. 1	at Kansas State	W	17-16
Oct. 15	at Texas Tech	W	48-17
Oct. 22	TCU	W	34-10
Oct. 29	at Oklahoma State	L	20-37
Nov. 5	Kansas	W	48-21
Nov. 12	at Texas	W	24-20
Nov. 19	Oklahoma	L	28-56
Nov. 26	at Iowa State	W	49-19
Dec. 3	Baylor	W	24-21
Dec. 28	vs. Miami %	L	14-31

#Landover %Russell Athletic Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Derrek Pitts, S, Dunbar, WV
2. Kelby Wickline, OL, Stillwater, OK*
3. Tevin Bush, RB, New Orleans, LA
4. Reggie Roberson, WR, DeSoto, TX
5. Kenny Robinson, S, Wilkinsburg, PA
6. Maverick Wolfley, RB, Morgantown, WV
7. David Sills V, WR, Wilmington, DE*
8. Quondarius Qualls, LB, Farmerville, LA*
9. Lamonte McDougle, DL, Pompano Beach, FL
10. E.J. Brown, S, Stone Mountain, GA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.2 ppg	7	50
Rushing	228.4 ypg	5	25
Passing	257.2 ypg	7	42
Total	485.5 ypg	6	17
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.0 ppg	2	35
Rushing	168.2 ypg	3	60
Passing	257.7 ypg	6	104
Total	425.9 ypg	3	74
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.31	3	38

STAT CORNER

59/64

Seniors accounted for 59% of West Virginia's tackles and 64% of tackles for a loss. Coordinator Tony Gibson has a rebuild on his hands.

OFFENSE WVU went into the summer confident — but not completely sure — it would have Florida transfer Will Grier in place at the start of the season. An appeal was in place with the NCAA to lift his suspension for using a banned supplement in Gainesville.

If Grier can start, it will be a rocket boost for West Virginia, which won the services of the quarterback over offers from Ohio State and Oregon, among others. At UF, he completed 106-of-161 passes (65.8 percent) for 1,204 yards, 10 touchdowns and three interceptions. The Gators were 6–0 before Grier was suspended in 2015. Sophomore Chris Chugunov will get the call if Grier has to sit.

WVU boasts a strong backfield, led by Justin Crawford, who had 1,184 rushing yards last season. At receiver, West Virginia will have to replace deep threat Shelton Gibson and solid Daikiel Shorts, but the Mountaineers have talent in Ka'Raun White, brother of Chicago Bear Kevin, as well as Gary Jennings and Marcus Simms.

The questions are along the offensive line. All-America center Tyler Orlosky and solid left guard Adam Pankey must be replaced. Left tackle Yodny Cajuste is coming off an ACL injury.

DEFENSE Defensive coordinator Tony Gibson has work to do. He has a nice corps of linebackers and two exceptional safeties, but he is replacing the entire front of his 3-3-5 defense and needs his cornerbacks to step up.

In the backfield, talented free safety Dravon Askew-Henry is back from an ACL injury. He's what Gibson calls "kind of the quarterback of our defense." Also back is former four-star junior college recruit Kyzir White, brother of Ka'Raun and Kevin. At corner, Syracuse graduate transfer Corey Winfield is expected to help.

At linebacker, the Mountaineers should be fine with 6'2", 238-pound Xavier Preston, sophomore David Long and team leader Al-Rasheed Benton. Along the line, though, all three starters from last season — Christian Brown, Darrien Howard and Noble Nwachukwu — are gone.

Senior Xavier Pegues could be a solid nose tackle, but the defensive end position projects two sophomores — Reese Donahue and Adam Shuler II — as starters.

SPECIALISTS Holgorsen says WVU will do things differently on special teams this season. That's understandable considering the kickoff return coverage was No. 103 nationally and the punt return team was No. 124. Yet don't expect much turnover in regard to specialists. Placekicker Mike Molina converted 15-of-22 field goal attempts (68.2 percent), a success rate that ranked just No. 84 nationally. Nick Meadows will be the long snapper. At punter, Billy Kinney, a junior, averaged 41.7 yards, No. 48 nationally in 2016. He's expected to handle the duties again. WVU will have to find a replacement for Gibson in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS As Holgorsen, armed with a new contract that extends through 2021, said throughout the spring, West Virginia has talented players. Grier at quarterback, Ka'Raun White at receiver and Crawford at running back comprise a trinity that's tough to beat. Offensive line coach Joe Wickline should be able to build a decent front with guard Kyle Bosch as the anchor.

On defense, though, questions swirl around the line and at corner. Expect the opposition to test the WVU front early and often in 2017. Also, uncertainty at corner might give blitz-happy Gibson pause.

In addition, there's concern as to whether those in key positions coming off injuries — Cajuste, Ka'Raun White, Askew-Henry, Pegues and linebacker Brendan Ferns — will return to prior form.

Overall, though, WVU has plenty of confidence coming off a 10-win season and enough talent to challenge in a watered-down Big 12.



JUSTIN CRAWFORD

"Tony Gibson is the best defensive coordinator in the conference, and I'm not the only one who thinks that."

– An opposing Big 12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	8	Marcus Simms (So.)	80	Dominique Maiden (Jr.)	
WR	12	Gary Jennings (Jr.)	13	David Sills (Jr.)	
WR	2	**Ka'Raun White (Sr.)**	5	**Jovon Durante (Jr.)**	
LT	55	Yodny Cajuste (Jr.)	72	Kelby Wickline (So.)	
LG	62	**Kyle Bosch (Sr.)**	67	Alec Shriner (So.)	
C	79	Matt Jones (So.)	64	Ray Raulerson (Jr.)	
RG	56	Grant Lingafelter (Sr.)	76	Chase Behrndt (Fr.)	
RT	53	**Colton McKivitz (So.)**	73	Josh Sills (Fr.)	
TE	81	Trevon Wesco (Jr.)	89	Matt Bezjak (Fr.)	
QB	7	Will Grier (Jr.)	11	Chris Chugunov (So.)	
RB	25	Justin Crawford (Sr.)	4	Kennedy McKoy (So.)	

DEFENSE (3)

DE	88	Adam Shuler II (So.)	92	Jon Lewis (Sr.)	
NT	99	Xavier Pegues (Sr.)	96	Jaleel Fields (Jr.)	
DE	46	Reese Donahue (So.)	22	Ezekiel Rose (Jr.)	
SLB	5	Xavier Preston (Sr.)	45	Adam Hensley (So.)	
MLB	3	**Al-Rasheed Benton (Sr.)**	7	Brendan Ferns (Fr.)	
WLB	11	**David Long (So.)**	10	Dylan Tonkery (Fr.)	
CB		Corey Winfield (Sr.)	40	Mike Daniels (Sr.)	
CB	19	Elijah Battle (Sr.)	24	Hakeem Bailey (So.)	
SPUR	8	**Kyzir White (Sr.)**	18	Marvin Gross (Sr.)	
FS	6	Dravon Askew-Henry (Jr.)	38	Shane Commodore (Sr.)	
BAN	16	Toyous Avery (Jr.)	1	Derrek Pitts (Fr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	48	Mike Molina (Sr.)	KR	12	Gary Jennings (Jr.)
P	15	Billy Kinney (Jr.)	PR	12	Gary Jennings (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chris Chugunov, 5-2-15-1, 0 TDs
Rushing: Justin Crawford, 163 att., 1,184 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Ka'Raun White, 48 rec., 583 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Al-Rasheed Benton, 80
Sacks: Kyzir White, 3.0
Interceptions: Al-Rasheed Benton, 1; Marvin Gross Jr., 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dana Holgorsen
Record at School: 46-31 (6 years)
Career Record: 46-31 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jake Spavital
Defensive Coordinator: Tony Gibson
Morgantown, WV • Milan Puskar Stadium (60,000)

Bruce Schwartzman

BIG TEN PREVIEW


J. T. BARRETT

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	EAST	WEST
1	OHIO STATE BUCKEYES 12-1, 8-1	WISCONSIN BADGERS 10-3, 7-2
2	PENN STATE NITTANY LIONS 10-2, 7-2	NORTHWESTERN WILDCATS 8-4, 5-4
3	MICHIGAN WOLVERINES 10-2, 7-2	NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS 7-5, 5-4
4	MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS 6-6, 4-5	IOWA HAWKEYES 7-5, 4-5
5	INDIANA HOOSIERS 7-5, 4-5	MINNESOTA GOLDEN GOPHERS 6-6, 4-5
6	MARYLAND TERRAPINS 6-6, 4-5	PURDUE BOILERMAKERS 3-9, 2-7
7	RUTGERS SCARLET KNIGHTS 3-9, 1-8	ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI 2-10, 1-8

Big Ten Championship: Ohio State over Wisconsin

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Fiesta Bowl (CFP): Clemson 31, Ohio State 0
Rose Bowl: USC 52, Penn State 49
Orange Bowl: Florida State 33, Michigan 32
Cotton Bowl: Wisconsin 24, Western Michigan 16
Outback Bowl: Florida 30, Iowa 3
Music City Bowl: Tennessee 38, Nebraska 24
Holiday Bowl: Minnesota 17, Washington State 12
Pinstripe Bowl: Northwestern 31, Pittsburgh 24
Foster Farms Bowl: Utah 26, Indiana 24
Quick Lane Bowl: Boston College 36, Maryland 30

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Rose Bowl (CFP): Ohio State vs. Florida State
Orange Bowl: Penn State vs. Clemson
Cotton Bowl: Michigan vs. Oklahoma
Outback Bowl: Wisconsin vs. Tennessee
Holiday Bowl: Northwestern vs. Oregon
Pinstripe Bowl: Nebraska vs. North Carolina
Foster Farms Bowl: Iowa vs. Washington State
Quick Lane Bowl: Michigan State vs. Wake Forest
Armed Forces Bowl: Minnesota vs. Army
Music City Bowl: Indiana vs. Kentucky

Barrett: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Hamilton: Bruce Schwartzman

2016 BIG TEN STANDINGS

EAST	BIG TEN	OVERALL	WEST	BIG TEN	OVERALL
OHIO STATE	8-1	11-2	WISCONSIN	7-2	11-3
PENN STATE	8-1	11-3	NEBRASKA	6-3	9-4
MICHIGAN	7-2	10-3	IOWA	6-3	8-5
INDIANA	4-5	6-7	MINNESOTA	5-4	9-4
MARYLAND	3-6	6-7	NORTHWESTERN	5-4	7-6
MICHIGAN STATE	1-8	3-9	ILLINOIS	2-7	3-9
RUTGERS	0-9	2-10	PURDUE	1-8	3-9

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. Ohio State
2. Michigan
3. Penn State
4. Maryland
5. Nebraska
6. Michigan State
7. Wisconsin
8. Iowa
9. Rutgers
10. Illinois
11. Northwestern
12. Minnesota
13. Indiana
14. Purdue

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
ILLINOIS	12	13	9	12	13	14	13
INDIANA	7	14	2	7	10	4	5
IOWA	10	8	11	1	5	1	8
MARYLAND	11	7	8	9	9	7	7
MICHIGAN	3	4	6	5	2	6	9
MICHIGAN STATE	9	6	7	8	8	9	10
MINNESOTA	13	5	13	10	11	8	11
NEBRASKA	8	10	10	3	7	11	3
NORTHWESTERN	4	3	4	11	6	12	4
OHIO STATE	1	2	3	2	1	2	1
PENN STATE	2	1	1	6	4	5	6
PURDUE	5	11	14	14	12	10	14
RUTGERS	14	12	12	13	14	13	12
WISCONSIN	6	9	5	4	3	3	2



DAESEAN HAMILTON

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	J.T. Barrett	6-2	220	Sr.	Ohio State
RB	Saquon Barkley	5-11	223	Jr.	Penn State
RB	Justin Jackson	5-11	193	Sr.	Northwestern
AP	Mike Weber	5-10	214	So.	Ohio State
WR	DaeSean Hamilton	6-1	205	Sr.	Penn State
WR	Nick Westbrook	6-3	210	Jr.	Indiana
TE	Troy Fumagalli	6-6	249	Sr.	Wisconsin
C	Billy Price	6-4	312	Sr.	Ohio State
OL	Brian Allen	6-2	305	Sr.	Michigan State
OL	Mason Cole	6-5	305	Sr.	Michigan
OL	Jamarco Jones	6-5	310	Sr.	Ohio State
OL	Sean Welsh	6-3	295	Sr.	Iowa

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Rashan Gary	6-5	287	So.	Michigan
DL	Sam Hubbard	6-5	265	Jr.	Ohio State
DL	Maurice Hurst	6-2	282	Sr.	Michigan
DL	Tyquan Lewis	6-4	265	Sr.	Ohio State
LB	Jerome Baker	6-1	225	Jr.	Ohio State
LB	Josey Jewell	6-2	236	Sr.	Iowa
LB	Tegray Scales	6-0	230	Sr.	Indiana
CB	Rashard Fant	5-10	175	Sr.	Indiana
CB	Chris Jones	6-0	195	Sr.	Nebraska
S	Marcus Allen	6-2	202	Sr.	Penn State
S	Godwin Igwebuike	6-0	205	Sr.	Northwestern

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Emmit Carpenter	6-0	199	Jr.	Minnesota
P	Blake Gillikin	6-2	182	So.	Penn State
KR	Janarion Grant	5-10	172	Sr.	Rutgers
PR	De'Mornay Pierson-El	5-9	195	Sr.	Nebraska

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Trace McSorley	6-0	205	Jr.	Penn State
RB	LJ Scott	6-1	231	Jr.	Michigan State
RB	Rodney Smith	5-11	205	Jr.	Minnesota
AP	Akrum Wadley	5-11	195	Sr.	Iowa
WR	Janarion Grant	5-10	172	Sr.	Rutgers
WR	Jazz Peavy	6-0	185	Sr.	Wisconsin
TE	Mike Gesicki	6-6	252	Sr.	Penn State
C	James Daniels	6-4	295	Jr.	Iowa
OL	Ryan Bates	6-4	305	So.	Penn State
OL	Beau Benzschawel	6-6	316	Jr.	Wisconsin
OL	Michael Deiter	6-6	329	Jr.	Wisconsin
OL	Nick Gates	6-5	290	Jr.	Nebraska

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Nick Bosa	6-4	270	So.	Ohio State
DL	Dre'Mont Jones	6-3	295	So.	Ohio State
DL	Steven Richardson	6-0	300	Sr.	Minnesota
DL	Conor Sheehy	6-4	290	Sr.	Wisconsin
LB	Jason Cabinda	6-1	232	Sr.	Penn State
LB	Jack Cichy	6-2	233	Sr.	Wisconsin
LB	T.J. Edwards	6-1	246	Jr.	Wisconsin
CB	Derrick Tindal	5-11	183	Sr.	Wisconsin
CB	Denzel Ward	5-10	191	Jr.	Ohio State
S	D'Cota Dixon	5-10	199	Sr.	Wisconsin
S	Damon Webb	5-11	195	Sr.	Ohio State

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Tyler Davis	5-11	180	Sr.	Penn State
P	Ryan Santoso	6-6	250	Sr.	Minnesota
KR	Parris Campbell	6-1	208	Jr.	Ohio State
PR	Janarion Grant	5-10	172	Sr.	Rutgers

INDIANA HOOSIERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **54** • BIG TEN EAST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5 4-5 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	Ohio State	
Sept. 9	at Virginia	
Sept. 16	FIU	
Sept. 23	Georgia Southern	
Sept. 30	at Penn State	
Oct. 14	Michigan	
Oct. 21	at Michigan State	
Oct. 28	at Maryland	
Nov. 4	Wisconsin	
Nov. 11	at Illinois	
Nov. 18	Rutgers	
Nov. 25	at Purdue	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 4-5 BIG TEN

Sept. 1	at FIU	W	34-13
Sept. 10	Ball State	W	30-20
Sept. 24	Wake Forest	L	28-33
Oct. 1	Michigan State	(ot) W	24-21
Oct. 8	at Ohio State	L	17-38
Oct. 15	Nebraska	L	22-27
Oct. 22	at Northwestern	L	14-24
Oct. 29	Maryland	W	42-36
Nov. 5	at Rutgers	W	33-27
Nov. 12	Penn State	L	31-45
Nov. 19	at Michigan	L	10-20
Nov. 26	Purdue	W	26-24
Dec. 28	vs. Utah #	L	24-26

#Foster Farms Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Juwan Burgess, ATH, Tampa, FL
2. Bryant Fitzgerald, DB, Indianapolis, IN
3. Morgan Ellison, RB, Pickerington, OH
4. Juan Harris, DL, Janesville, WI
5. Caleb Jones, OL, Indianapolis, IN
6. LeShaun Minor Jr., DL, Indianapolis, IN
7. De'Morreal Burnam, LB, Conyers, GA
8. Peyton Hendershot, TE, North Salem, IN
9. Lance Bryant, DL, Fresno, TX
10. Michael Ziemba, ATH, Lake Mary, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.8 ppg	8	88
Rushing	152.2 ypg	11	92
Passing	273.8 ypg	2	28
Total	426.0 ypg	3	56
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.2 ppg	9	57
Rushing	160.4 ypg	10	53
Passing	219.7 ypg	12	53
Total	380.1 ypg	9	45
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
-6	-0.46	12	104

STAT CORNER

3.6

Indiana outgained opponents by 0.5 yards per play but averaged just 3.6 points per trip inside the opponent's 40, 124th in FBS.

OFFENSE Personnel won't be the primary question for the Hoosiers, even with uncertainty at running back and the offensive line. Adjustment to a new scheme is the situation to watch. After six seasons of mostly prolific production and back-to-back bowl games, Kevin Wilson was dismissed after the season because of philosophical differences with athletic director Fred Glass. Tom Allen, the team's defensive coordinator for only one season, is the rookie head coach. Allen has entrusted the offense to Mike DeBord, a veteran coordinator whose offense averaged 36.4 points and 443.7 yards per game at Tennessee last season. Those numbers were better than Indiana's 25.8 and 426 in 2016.

DeBord is unlikely to play as fast or as wide open as Wilson. His first task is getting quarterback Richard Lagow to eliminate mistakes. Although he threw for nearly 3,400 yards, Lagow had 17 picks and completed less than 58 percent of his throws. His interceptions cost IU wins against Wake Forest and Nebraska. If DeBord prefers mobility, Peyton Ramsey will be the guy.

For the third straight season, IU lost a running back to the NFL as an underclassman. Camion Patrick, a converted receiver, has earned only four carries in two seasons because of academic and health issues, but his size and speed give him an edge — if he can stay healthy. If not, look for a committee approach featuring Mike Majette and Cole Gest. Receiver is Indiana's strongest offensive position with Nick Westbrook, Simmie Cobbs (back from injury) and the improving Donavan Hale.

Tackle Coy Cronk will anchor a rebuilding offensive line that will be under the tutelage of Darren Hiller after Greg Frey departed for the same job at Michigan.

DEFENSE Allen earned the job because of the substantial improvement of IU's defense. A year after the Hoosiers ranked last in the league while allowing nearly 510 yards per game, the Hoosiers limited opponents to 380, ranking ninth in the Big Ten. Nine starters return.

The Hoosiers must improve their pass rush. Tackle Nate Hoff and end Greg Gooch are solid against the run, but Nile Sykes emerged as a powerful pass rusher, contributing five sacks. Tegray Scales is one of the best linebackers in the Big Ten, a formidable tackler who led the team with 23.5 tackles for a loss. Marcelino Ball started every game as a freshman at the hybrid linebacker/safety position that is the trademark of Allen's 4-2-5 alignment. Marcus Oliver, a three-year starter at linebacker, will likely be replaced by Chris Covington, who started his career at quarterback.

Indiana's biggest improvement last season came in the secondary, where every starter returns, led by senior Rashard Fant, who intercepted three passes and broke up 17.

SPECIALISTS Allen believes the Hoosiers can close the talent gap against more powerful rivals with improved special teams play, and he backed up his belief by upgrading personnel, signing Haydon Whitehead from the ProKick program in Australia to improve the punting. After making 24-of-29 kicks in 2015, placekicker Griffin Oakes missed 10 of his 26 attempts in 2016, which cost IU in several defeats. Devonte Williams will return kickoffs again, but Mitchell Paige must be replaced as the punt returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS Wilson's offense made Indiana competitive in nearly every game the last two seasons. With a new scheme, unproven running backs and several holes on the offensive line, the Hoosiers need Lagow to stop throwing interceptions while developing a solid running back. But the defense is formidable, faster and confident. Indiana should be able to hold its spot ahead of Maryland and Rutgers in the rugged Big Ten East.



TEGRAY SCALES

"Tom Allen can do what Indiana needs to win because he's more like Bill Mallory than any coach that's been there since."

– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	1	Simmie Cobbs (Jr.)	7	Taysir Mack (Fr.)	
WR	15	**Nick Westbrook (Jr.)**	10	Donavan Hale (Jr.)	
WR	82	Luke Timian (Jr.)	13	Isaac James (So.)	
LT	54	**Coy Cronk (So.)**	71	Delroy Baker (Jr.)	
LG	76	**Wes Martin (Jr.)**	64	Ryan Smith (Fr.)	
C	68	Hunter Littlejohn (So.)	61	Nick Ramacca (So.)	
RG	72	Simon Stepaniak (So.)	51	Mackenzie Nworah (Fr.)	
RT	62	Brandon Knight (Jr.)	56	Grayson Stover (Fr.)	
TE	80	Ian Thomas (Sr.)	**84**	**Danny Friend (Sr.)**	
QB	21	**Richard Lagow (Sr.)**	3	Peyton Ramsey (Fr.)	
RB	24	Mike Majette (Jr.)	20	Cole Gest (Fr.)	

DEFENSE (9)

DE	49	**Greg Gooch (Sr.)**	35	Nile Sykes (Jr.)	
DT	74	**Nate Hoff (Sr.)**	54	Ja'merez Bowen (Jr.)	
DT	91	**Jacob Robinson (Jr.)**	51	Mike Barwick Jr. (Jr.)	
DE	47	Robert McCray III (Sr.)	95	Brandon Wilson (So.)	
LB	17	Chris Covington (Sr.)	43	Dameon Willis (Jr.)	
LB	8	**Tegray Scales (Sr.)**	26	Kiante Walton (So.)	
HUS	42	**Marcelino Ball (So.)**	6	Zeke Walker (Jr.)	
CB	16	**Rashard Fant (Sr.)**	**28**	**A'Shon Riggins (So.)**	
CB	14	Andre Brown (So.)	3	Tyler Green (Jr.)	
SS	9	**Jonathan Crawford (Jr.)**	7	Khalil Bryant (So.)	
FS	19	**Tony Fields (Sr.)**	30	Chase Dutra (Sr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Griffin Oakes (Sr.)	KR	2	Devonte Williams (So.)
P	94	Haydon Whitehead (So.)	PR	16	Rashard Fant (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Richard Lagow, 438-253-3,362-17, 19 TDs
Rushing: Tyler Natee, 61 att., 237 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Nick Westbrook, 54 rec., 995 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Tegray Scales, 126
Sacks: Tegray Scales, 7.0
Interceptions: Jonathan Crawford, 3; Rashard Fant, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tom Allen
Record at School: 0-1 (1 game)
Career Record: 0-1 (1 game)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike DeBord
Defensive Coordinator: Tom Allen
Bloomington, IN • Memorial Stadium (52,929)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

MARYLAND TERRAPINS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **57** • BIG TEN EAST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-5 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Texas
Sept.	9	Towson
Sept.	23	UCF
Sept.	30	at Minnesota
Oct.	7	at Ohio State
Oct.	14	Northwestern
Oct.	21	at Wisconsin
Oct.	28	Indiana
Nov.	4	vs. Rutgers #
Nov.	11	Michigan
Nov.	18	at Michigan State
Nov.	25	Penn State

#Bronx, NY

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 3-6 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	Howard	W	52-13
Sept.	9	at FIU	W	41-14
Sept.	17	at UCF (ot)	W	30-24
Oct.	1	Purdue	W	50-7
Oct.	8	at Penn State	L	14-38
Oct.	15	Minnesota	L	10-31
Oct.	22	Michigan State	W	28-17
Oct.	29	at Indiana	L	36-42
Nov.	5	at Michigan	L	3-59
Nov.	12	Ohio State	L	3-62
Nov.	19	at Nebraska	L	7-28
Nov.	26	Rutgers	W	31-13
Dec.	26	vs. Boston College #	L	30-36

#Quick Lane Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Anthony McFarland, RB, Hyattsville, MD
2. Deon Jones, DB, Oxon Hill, MD
3. Markquese Bell, DB, Bridgeton, NJ
4. Marcus Minor, OL, Lanham, MD
5. Kasim Hill, QB, Washington, DC
6. Jordan McNair, OL, Owings Mills, MD
7. Cam Spence, DL, Washington, DC
8. Breyon Gaddy, DL, Virginia Beach, VA
9. Tahj Capehart, WR, Virginia Beach, VA
10. Ayinde Eley, OLB, Olney, MD

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.8 ppg	8	88
Rushing	199.5 ypg	4	43
Passing	178.2 ypg	10	106
Total	377.8 ypg	10	95
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.5 ppg	11	74
Rushing	214.8 ypg	11	99
Passing	212.3 ypg	9	45
Total	427.1 ypg	12	77
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.54	13	107

STAT CORNER

15/19

On defense, Maryland had a 15% sack rate on passing downs (third in FBS). On offense, the Terps allowed a 19% rate (last).

OFFENSE Quarterback Caleb Henderson looks tailor-made to step in and run Maryland's warp-speed attack. He's big and strong and has the ability to run, and he has a couple of years under his belt in a similar system at North Carolina. Sophomore Max Bortenschlager looked good in the spring, and the position looks deep for a program that has had troubles here in the past.

Running back is in even better shape with Ty Johnson and Lorenzo Harrison returning. Johnson set a school record with 9.1 yards per rush and had over 1,000 yards, and Harrison's 7.2-yard average was the best ever for a Maryland freshman. They'll operate behind an offensive line that has three starters returning and experience at the other two spots. The right side is intact with tackle Damian Prince and guard Terrance Davis, both emerging stars. Steady center Brendan Moore also returns, and there are inklings that left tackle Derwin Gray is due to bust out.

D.J. Moore headlines a speedy and versatile receiving corps. He has scored nine touchdowns in two years. Taivon Jacobs, back from a knee injury, can stretch the field, and prodigal Jacquille Veii, who transferred back to Maryland after a year at Towson, should be a star in the slot.

DEFENSE Jesse Aniebonam and his 9.0 sacks are back at Buck end, but he was getting a push in the spring from early enrollee Bryce Brand. That's good news, because the Terrapins need all the big bodies they can get. Opponents were grinding down the Terps defense by the end of the season. Kingsley Opara and Cavon Walker both return in the interior. Playing in coordinator Andy Buh's exotic packages, the Terrapins registered 2.9 sacks per game. Keep an eye on 6'4", 315-pound freshman Breyon Gaddy.

Jermaine Carter Jr. is a sideline-to-sideline middle linebacker who has led the team in tackles the last two seasons. He's hoping to have converted quarterback/fullback Shane Cockerille back alongside him if Cockerille gets out of D.J. Durkin's doghouse. The second-leading tackler was suspended for the Quick Lane Bowl and again in the spring. Converted defensive back Isaiah Davis will move in if necessary. Strong-side linebacker Jalen Brooks was playing his best football in the spring.

JC Jackson had some growing pains at corner after transferring in from Florida. He should be steadier, and youngsters like Tino Ellis and Deon Jones will also get a chance. Nickel back RaVon Davis is essentially a returning starter. Darnell Savage is a hard-hitting safety. Look for either fifth-year senior Denzel Conyers or freshman flash Markquese Bell to nail down the other safety job.

SPECIALISTS Adam Greene was 9-of-14 on field goal attempts but failed to hit one longer than 37 yards. He is battling kickoff specialist Mike Shinsky for the job. Aussie rugby punter Wade Lees was up and down but allowed just 20 returns all year on 72 punts. Moore averaged 22.3 return yards on kickoffs, and Veii should handle punt returns. Durkin isn't afraid to use his special teams units as a momentum-changing weapon.

FINAL ANALYSIS If the Terps could ever match Durkin's enthusiasm level with experience and talent on the field, Maryland might contend in the Big Ten's scary East Division. Despite a largely uplifting debut (double the wins from 2015 and a bowl appearance) for Durkin in College Park, the still young and inexperienced Terrapins aren't quite there yet. They still have depth issues, they're unproven at key spots, and they're just not as talented as division rivals like Ohio State, Michigan, Penn State and Michigan State. Durkin won't let them want for want-to, though, and with more of his players around, Maryland should be worth watching.



JERMAINE CARTER JR.

"Why are they playing Texas? They're out-talented in their division enough; they need to schedule smarter than that."

– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	1	**D.J. Moore (Jr.)**	10	DJ Turner (So.)	
WR	12	Taivon Jacobs (Sr.)	85	Jahrvis Davenport (Jr.)	
WR	84	Jacquille Veii (Sr.)	37	Chris Jones (Sr.)	
LT	55	Derwin Gray (Jr.)	74	Brian Plummer (Fr.)	
LG	70	Sean Christie (Jr.)		Marcus Minor (Fr.)	
C	64	**Brendan Moore (Jr.)**	68	Ellis McKennie (So.)	
RG	75	**Terrance Davis (So.)**	77	Will McClain (So.)	
RT	58	**Damian Prince (Jr.)**	57	Richard Merritt (Fr.)	
TE	48	**Derrick Hayward (Sr.)**	82	Avery Edwards (Jr.)	
QB	2	Caleb Henderson (Jr.)	18	Max Bortenschlager (So.)	
RB	6	**Ty Johnson (Jr.)**	23	Lorenzo Harrison (So.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	41	Jesse Aniebonam (Sr.)	27	Bryce Brand (Fr.)	
NT	57	**Kingsley Opara (Sr.)**	93	Oseh Saine (So.)	
DT	18	Cavon Walker (Sr.)		Breyon Gaddy (Fr.)	
DE	92	**Chandler Burkett (Sr.)**	96	Brett Kulka (Jr.)	
WLB	2	**Shane Cockerille (Sr.)**	22	Isaiah Davis (So.)	
MLB	1	**Jermaine Carter, Jr. (Sr.)**	42	Nick Underwood (So.)	
SLB	43	Jalen Brooks (Sr.)	53	Brett Shepherd (So.)	
CB	7	**JC Jackson (Jr.)**	14	Deon Jones (Fr.)	
CB	17	Tino Ellis (So.)	21	RaVon Davis (Jr.)	
S	4	**Darnell Savage (Jr.)**	23	Alex Woods (Jr.)	
S	11	Denzel Conyers (Sr.)	13	Markquese Bell (Fr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	3	Adam Greene (Sr.)	KR	1	D.J. Moore (Jr.)
P	88	Wade Lees (So.)	PR	84	Jacquille Veii (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tyrrell Pigrome, 71-37-322-2, 2 TDs
Rushing: Ty Johnson, 110 att., 1,004 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: D.J. Moore, 41 rec., 637 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Jermaine Carter Jr., 110
Sacks: Jesse Aniebonam, 9.0
Interceptions: Three players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: DJ Durkin
Record at School: 6-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 7-7 (1+ year)
Offensive Coordinator: Walt Bell
Defensive Coordinators: Jimmy Brumbaugh, Andy Buh
College Park, MD • Maryland Stadium (51,802)

Bruce Schwartzman

MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **10** • BIG TEN EAST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **10-2, 7-2 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	vs. Florida #
Sept.	9	Cincinnati
Sept.	16	Air Force
Sept.	23	at Purdue
Oct.	7	Michigan State
Oct.	14	at Indiana
Oct.	21	at Penn State
Oct.	28	Rutgers
Nov.	4	Minnesota
Nov.	11	at Maryland
Nov.	18	at Wisconsin
Nov.	25	Ohio State

#Arlington, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 7-2 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	Hawaii	W	63-3
Sept.	10	UCF	W	51-14
Sept.	17	Colorado	W	45-28
Sept.	24	Penn State	W	49-10
Oct.	1	Wisconsin	W	14-7
Oct.	8	at Rutgers	W	78-0
Oct.	22	Illinois	W	41-8
Oct.	29	at Michigan State	W	32-23
Nov.	5	Maryland	W	59-3
Nov.	12	at Iowa	L	13-14
Nov.	19	Indiana	W	20-10
Nov.	26	at Ohio State (ot)	L	27-30
Dec.	30	vs. Florida State #	L	32-33

#Orange Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Donovan Peoples-Jones, WR, Southfield, MI
2. Aubrey Solomon, DL, Leesburg, GA
3. Cesar Ruiz, OL, Camden, NJ
4. Luiji Vilain, DE, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
5. Drew Singleton, LB, Union, NJ
6. Ambry Thomas, DB, Detroit, MI
7. Jordan Anthony, LB, Silver Spring, MD
8. Chuck Filiaga, OL, Aledo, TX
9. Tarik Black, WR, Hamden, CT
10. Dylan McCaffrey, QB, Castle Rock, CO

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	40.3 ppg	1	11
Rushing	212.9 ypg	2	33
Passing	212.0 ypg	7	85
Total	424.9 ypg	4	58
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	14.1 ppg	1	2
Rushing	119.2 ypg	3	15
Passing	142.5 ypg	1	1
Total	261.8 ypg	1	1
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
+7	+0.54	5	24

STAT CORNER

34/9.1

Michigan forced three-and-outs on 34% of their drives (second in FBS). The result: a 9.1-yard average field position margin (first).

OFFENSE Michigan loses a ton of experience across the board. That's the bad news. The good news? Jim Harbaugh does bring back his quarterback in Wilton Speight, and he was able to get a boatload of younger players into games last season to develop critical experience moving forward.

Speight will be the team's starting quarterback unless something unexpected happens, as he threw for more than 2,500 yards to go along with 18 touchdowns and a 61.9 percent completion rate a year ago. He'll have all new receivers, though, as Amara Darboh, Jehu Chesson and Jake Butt are off to the NFL. Michigan boasts plenty of young talent — players like Kekoa Crawford, Eddie McDoom and five-star freshman Donovan Peoples-Jones — but none of it is proven. Sophomore Chris Evans, who averaged 7.0 yards per carry last season, leads an experienced running back group, the only experienced group on this side of the ball.

Up front, things will be a challenge. And, frankly, the offensive line will once again be the determining factor in how far Michigan goes in 2017. Last year's group was experienced, but it faltered in three losses against Iowa, Ohio State and Florida State. Michigan brings back versatile senior Mason Cole and talented sophomore Ben Bredeson, but Harbaugh and offensive coordinator Tim Drevno will need three new starters. And the pool they'll be choosing from has one combined start to offer.

DEFENSE Michigan loses 10 starters from the country's top-ranked defensive unit, including Heisman finalist Jabrill Peppers, captain Chris Wormley, star corner Jourdan Lewis and sack leader Taco Charlton. But it does bring back coordinator Don Brown, who helped push this unit to the next level with his high-pressure blitzing scheme last year. And, as was the case offensively, Michigan rotated a ton of youth here last season, so inexperienced players don't have much to show on the start chart.

End Rashan Gary is an athletic freak and might be the best player on the team right now. Maurice Hurst turned down a chance to go pro early and is back as a leader up front at tackle. Elsewhere, hungry sophomores Devin Bush, Khaleke Hudson, Josh Metellus, David Long and Lavert Hill will look to make their mark in starting roles. They have big shoes to fill, but all of them got real-time reps last year at linebacker, safety and corner, respectively.

SPECIALISTS When Michigan lost Kenny Allen and Peppers, it lost basically everything in terms of special teams. Allen handled all the kicking and punting duties last year. And Peppers' ability as a punt returner was the main reason why this team led the country in field position last season. Redshirt freshman kicker Quinn Nordin will have to live up to his former No. 1-ranking as a recruit. And freshman Brad Robbins, the top-ranked punter in 2017, will have to adjust quickly.

FINAL ANALYSIS Harbaugh's demanding enough as a coach to push a team to more wins than its talent and/or experience level typically produce. He's proven this on numerous occasions. But he'll be kicking himself for not getting more out of a supremely talented 2016 group. Now, he'll have to circle the wagons and live with growing pains — especially on offense — throughout 2017 as he'll have one of the youngest squads Michigan's had in some time. This team does get Ohio State at home, but a road trip to an improved Penn State squad won't be easy. Neither will a season-opening game against Florida in Texas. If Michigan can speed up its development process this offseason, it has the talent to grab double-digit wins. If not, it's young enough to be staring an 8–4 year in the face.



WILTON SPEIGHT

"They're scouting opponents better than anyone in our league. They're at Alabama's level of prep and analysis. It's hard to surprise them."
– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	1	Kekoa Crawford (So.)	9	Donovan Peoples-Jones (Fr.)
WR	13	Eddie McDoom (So.)	25	Nate Johnson (So.)
LT	52	**Mason Cole (Sr.)**		Chuck Filiaga (Fr.)
LG	74	**Ben Bredeson (So.)**	75	Jon Runyan Jr. (Jr.)
C	57	Patrick Kugler (Sr.)	51	Cesar Ruiz (Fr.)
RG	50	Michael Onwenu (So.)	72	Stephen Spanellis (Fr.)
RT	76	Juwann Bushell-Beatty (Jr.)	70	Nolan Ulizio (So.)
TE	17	Tyrone Wheatley Jr. (So.)	89	**Ian Bunting (Jr.)**
QB	3	**Wilton Speight (Jr.)**	18	Brandon Peters (Fr.)
RB	12	Chris Evans (So.)	32	Ty Isaac (Sr.)
FB	80	Khalid Hill (Sr.)	19	**Henry Poggi (Sr.)**

DEFENSE (1)

DE	3	Rashan Gary (So.)	2	Carlo Kemp (Fr.)
DT	73	Maurice Hurst (Sr.)		Aubrey Solomon (Fr.)
NT	90	Bryan Mone (Sr.)	50	Michael Dwumfour (Fr.)
DE	15	Chase Winovich (Jr.)	95	Donovan Jeter (Fr.)
MLB	10	Devin Bush Jr. (So.)	46	Mike Wroblewski (Sr.)
WLB	9	**Mike McCray (Sr.)**	35	Josh Uche (So.)
SLB	7	Khaleke Hudson (So.)	29	Jordan Glasgow (Jr.)
CB	24	Lavert Hill (So.)	1	Ambry Thomas (Fr.)
CB	22	David Long (So.)	28	Brandon Watson (So.)
SS	13	Josh Metellus (So.)	29	Jordan Glasgow (So.)
FS	23	Tyree Kinnel (Jr.)		Jaylen Kelly-Powell (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	3	Quinn Nordin (Fr.)	KR	22	David Long (So.)
P		Brad Robbins (Fr.)	PR	13	Eddie McDoom (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Wilton Speight, 331-204-2,538-7, 18 TDs
Rushing: Chris Evans, 88 att., 614 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Grant Perry, 13 rec., 183 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Mike McCray, 76
Sacks: Chase Winovich, 5.0
Interceptions: Mike McCray, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jim Harbaugh
Record at School: 20-6 (2 years)
Career Record: 78-33 (9 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tim Drevno
Defensive Coordinator: Don Brown
Ann Arbor, MI • Michigan Stadium (107,601)

Tom Lynn

MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **49** • BIG TEN EAST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-5 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Bowling Green
Sept.	9	Western Michigan
Sept.	23	Notre Dame
Sept.	30	Iowa
Oct.	7	at Michigan
Oct.	14	at Minnesota
Oct.	21	Indiana
Oct.	28	at Northwestern
Nov.	4	Penn State
Nov.	11	at Ohio State
Nov.	18	Maryland
Nov.	25	at Rutgers

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 1-8 BIG TEN

Sept.	2	Furman	W	28-13
Sept.	17	at Notre Dame	W	36-28
Sept.	24	Wisconsin	L	6-30
Oct.	1	at Indiana	(ot) L	21-24
Oct.	8	BYU	L	14-31
Oct.	15	Northwestern	L	40-54
Oct.	22	at Maryland	L	17-28
Oct.	29	Michigan	L	23-32
Nov.	5	at Illinois	L	27-31
Nov.	12	Rutgers	W	49-0
Nov.	19	Ohio State	L	16-17
Nov.	26	at Penn State	L	12-45

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kevin Jarvis, OG, Park Ridge, IL
2. Matt Dotson, TE, Kenwood, OH
3. Antjuan Simmons, LB, Ypsilanti, MI
4. Jordan Reid, OT, Mount Clemens, MI
5. Cody White, WR, Novi, MI
6. Rocky Lombardi, QB, Clive, IA
7. Jacub Panasiuk, DE, Roselle, IL
8. Weston Bridges, RB, Copley, OH
9. Connor Heyward, ATH, Duluth, GA
10. Lashawn Paulino-Bell, DE, Tamarac, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG 12	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.1 ppg	12	104
Rushing	172.7 ypg	6	65
Passing	222.3 ypg	5	74
Total	395.0 ypg	6	75
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.8 ppg	10	61
Rushing	158.7 ypg	9	51
Passing	206.2 ypg	7	36
Total	364.8 ypg	7	32
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG 12**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	10	98

STAT CORNER

-19

Michigan State's turnover margin changed by 19 in 2016, from plus-14 to minus-5. Not a coincidence that close games flipped, too.

OFFENSE Michigan State's pro-style offense will get back to smashmouth basics and effectiveness in 2017 with a punishing tailback, good talent at wideout, a capable offensive line and a rising quarterback you may not have heard of in Brian Lewerke. The mobile, crafty Lewerke started two games at midseason last year as a freshman before being lost to a broken leg, but he has come back strong. Lewerke has the arm to throw to the wide side of the field and the quick mind to get the ball out on time.

Sophomore Trishton Jackson looks like a future All-Big Ten candidate at wide receiver. Donnie Corley is the leading returning receiver, with 33 catches a year ago as a freshman.

Junior tailback LJ Scott broke the 100-yard mark in four of the last six games last year and is motivated to have a good enough season to leave for the NFL one year early. Senior Gerald Holmes is a rugged, reliable leader with 1,015 career rushing yards and 13 TDs.

There are questions at tight end with Josiah Price and his 22 career touchdowns having graduated, but junior Matt Sokol is taller, a bit more athletic and ready.

The Spartans are good at left tackle with Cole Chewins and center with Brian Allen. MSU can put players with starting experience at the other three positions.

DEFENSE Michigan State would like to get away from some of the predictable nature of its quarters zone defense, but it needs established, quality defensive backs to make progress in that area. The Spartans have developed talent in the back end but might be a year away from having the type of run-stopping front, pass rush and experience in the secondary to have hopes of fielding their first top-10 defense since Pat Narduzzi's departure.

In the meantime, a strong tag team of young defensive tackles — sophomores Raequan Williams and Mike Panasiuk — is laying the groundwork for Michigan State's defensive revitalization. Redshirt freshman Naquan Jones is a bull, too. However, there is a lack of a proven edge rusher. Demetrius Cooper was a disappointment and needs to have a bounce-back season. Robert Bowers is progressing nicely but isn't a difference maker.

Chris Frey brings psycho intensity at Sam linebacker. He's not a superstar, but he's dependable and energetic. A heady thumper with good speed, Joe Bachie is ready to emerge as the next standout middle linebacker for the Spartans.

Youngsters Justin Layne and Josiah Scott could be future stars at cornerback. Junior Vayante Copeland could fend them off and meet his potential as a starter if he can stay healthy. Michigan State's speed is suspect at safety with Khari Willis, Matt Morrissey and Grayson Miller.

SPECIALISTS Jake Hartbarger is back after ranking sixth in the Big Ten in punting with a 40.9-yard average. Redshirt freshman Matt Coghlin, the new placekicker, had shaky stats as a high school senior.

FINAL ANALYSIS It's doubtful that Michigan State will be able to rise up from last year's disastrous 3–9 season to replicate something similar to the Spartans' 2015 trek to the College Football Playoff or their top-five finishes of 2013 and '14. A landing somewhere between those two extremes is more likely as Mark Dantonio tries to work past off-field problems and rekindle the discipline and toughness that helped him put Michigan State in the national picture.

The beginning of a new bowl streak is likely in 2017, as the rebuilding process takes shape with a number of intriguing young playmakers on the roster. However, Michigan State doesn't have the proven depth or senior leadership of the championship-level teams Dantonio fielded earlier this decade.



LJ SCOTT

"The offense needs new ideas. Take risks. Do something fresh and different. They're in a rut with play calling."

– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (2)

WR	86	Trishton Jackson (So.)	9	Donnie Corley (So.)	
WR	25	Darrell Stewart Jr. (So.)	5	Hunter Rison (Fr.)	
WR	18	Felton Davis III (Jr.)	21	Cam Chambers (Fr.)	
LT	61	Cole Chewins (So.)	73	Dennis Finley (Sr.)	
LG	70	Tyler Higby (So.)	71	Chase Gianacakos (Jr.)	
C	65	**Brian Allen (Sr.)**	66	Matt Allen (Fr.)	
RG	59	David Beedle (Jr.)	60	Casey Schreiner (Jr.)	
RT	62	Luke Campbell (Fr.)	76	A.J. Arcuri (Fr.)	
TE	81	Matt Sokol (Jr.)	84	Noah Davis (Fr.)	
QB	14	Brian Lewerke (So.)	6	Damion Terry (Sr.)	
RB	3	**LJ Scott (Jr.)**	24	Gerald Holmes (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (3)

DE	98	**Demetrius Cooper (Sr.)**	48	Kenny Willekes (So.)	
DT	99	Raequan Williams (So.)	93	Naquan Jones (Fr.)	
DT	72	Mike Panasiuk (So.)	41	Gerald Owens (Jr.)	
DE	91	Robert Bowers (Jr.)	97	Justice Alexander (So.)	
OLB	23	**Chris Frey (Sr.)**	17	Tyriq Thompson (So.)	
MLB	35	Joe Bachie (So.)	49	Shane Jones (Sr.)	
OLB	5	**Andrew Dowell (Jr.)**	26	Brandon Randle (Fr.)	
CB	2	Justin Layne (So.)	15	Tyson Smith (Jr.)	
CB	22	Josiah Scott (Fr.)	13	Vayante Copeland (Jr.)	
SS	27	Khari Willis (Jr.)	10	Matt Morrissey (Jr.)	
FS	44	Grayson Miller (Jr.)	28	David Dowell (So.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Matt Coghlin (Fr.)	KR	25	Darrell Stewart Jr. (So.)
P	25	Jake Hartbarger (Jr.)	PR	16	Brandon Sowards (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brian Lewerke, 57-31-381-1, 2 TDs
Rushing: LJ Scott, 184 att., 994 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Donnie Corley, 33 rec., 453 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Chris Frey, 96
Sacks: Demetrius Cooper, 2.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mark Dantonio
Record at School: 90-42 (10 years)
Career Record: 108-59 (13 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Jim Bollman, Dave Warner
Defensive Coordinators: Harlon Barnett, Mike Tressel
East Lansing, MI • Spartan Stadium (75,005)

Joe Robbins

OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **2** • BIG TEN EAST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **12-1, 8-1 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	at Indiana
Sept.	9	Oklahoma
Sept.	16	Army
Sept.	23	UNLV
Sept.	30	at Rutgers
Oct.	7	Maryland
Oct.	14	at Nebraska
Oct.	28	Penn State
Nov.	4	at Iowa
Nov.	11	Michigan State
Nov.	18	Illinois
Nov.	25	at Michigan

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-2, 8-1 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	Bowling Green	W	77-10
Sept.	10	Tulsa	W	48-3
Sept.	17	at Oklahoma	W	45-24
Oct.	1	Rutgers	W	58-0
Oct.	8	Indiana	W	38-17
Oct.	15	at Wisconsin	(ot) W	30-23
Oct.	22	at Penn State	L	21-24
Oct.	29	Northwestern	W	24-20
Nov.	5	Nebraska	W	62-3
Nov.	12	at Maryland	W	62-3
Nov.	19	at Michigan State	W	17-16
Nov.	26	Michigan	(ot) W	30-27
Dec.	31	vs. Clemson #	L	0-31

#Fiesta Bowl; CFB Playoff Semifinal

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jeffrey Okudah, CB, Grand Prairie, TX
2. Chase Young, DE, Hyattsville, MD
3. Baron Browning, LB, Fort Worth, TX
4. Shaun Wade, CB, Jacksonville, FL
5. Wyatt Davis, OL, Bellflower, CA
6. Trevon Grimes, WR, Fort Lauderdale, FL
7. J.K. Dobbins, RB, La Grange, TX
8. Josh Myers, OL, Miamisburg, OH
9. Tate Martell, QB, Las Vegas, NV
10. Isaiah Pryor, DB, Lawrenceville, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.4 ppg	2	13
Rushing	245.2 ypg	1	11
Passing	213.9 ypg	6	81
Total	459.2 ypg	1	31
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	15.5 ppg	2	3
Rushing	124.5 ypg	4	19
Passing	172.2 ypg	2	7
Total	296.8 ypg	2	6
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
+15	+1.15	1	3

STAT CORNER

4.36

The Ohio State defense allowed only 4.36 yards per play last year to rank second in the Big Ten (behind Michigan) and third in the nation.

OFFENSE If you're guessing that the 31–0 loss to Clemson in the College Football Playoff didn't sit well with Urban Meyer, you'd be correct. Meyer, who is an astonishing 61–6 so far at Ohio State, has suffered just 29 defeats in his 15-year head coaching career, and the Clemson loss was his first shutout. He wasn't going to stew on it for the entire offseason without making changes.

Sure enough, play caller Tim Beck left to help out Tom Herman at Texas, paving the way for Meyer to hire former Indiana head coach Kevin Wilson to be his new offensive coordinator. That has fueled excitement in Buckeye Nation, which expects the offense to get back to a dynamic level.

Ohio State averaged 39.4 points and 459.2 yards per game but struggled down the stretch against Michigan State, Michigan and, of course, Clemson. Veteran quarterback J.T. Barrett couldn't get in sync with green receivers, and the line broke down in pass protection.

There's still every reason to expect a resurgence, though, with Barrett — and his 26–4 record as a starter — back behind center and Mike Weber just coming into his own as a running back after a quiet 1,000-yard rushing season. Youngsters J.K. Dobbins and Demario McCall look ready to add to the weaponry, while Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Binjimen Victor are among the wideouts who could emerge.

The line will miss the excellence and leadership of Pat Elflein, but Billy Price, who has logged 41 straight starts at guard, will move to center to replace him.

DEFENSE Loaded up front and highly athletic in the back end, the Silver Bullets will be coming after people this season. The approach will be professional with Greg Schiano in control of the defense and longtime NFL assistant Bill Davis tutoring the linebackers. Chris Worley will shift inside to replace the departed Raekwon McMillan, the team's leading tackler the last two seasons. Worley and outside backer Jerome Baker had a penchant for logging top performances against elite teams.

The line will be ferocious. Tyquan Lewis and Sam Hubbard return, bringing 18.5 TFLs from 2016 with them, and position coach Larry Johnson also can rotate in pocket destructors Jalyn Holmes, Nick Bosa and Jonathon Cooper. Inside, OSU has the same wealth with seniors Michael Hill and Tracy Sprinkle able to rotate with Dre'Mont Jones and Robert Landers, who were freshman sensations last year.

The secondary is rebuilding with corners Marshon Lattimore and Gareon Conley and safety Malik Hooker all off to the NFL. However, there are plenty of rangy and talented defensive backs left on the roster.

SPECIALISTS With the Buckeyes breaking offensive records and sending scads of players to the NFL, many fans may forget that Cameron Johnston was one of the best punters in program history. Johnston's booming leg and uncanny ability to pin teams deep will be missed. Youngster Drue Chrisman, though, could be an asset in his own right. Sean Nuernberger will have every chance to win his placekicking duties back after giving way to walk-on Tyler Durbin and a hip injury last year.

FINAL ANALYSIS Last year's Buckeyes deserve credit for growing up quickly, finding playmakers on each side of the ball and advancing all the way to the College Football Playoff. However, a bad taste remains from the goose egg Clemson fed the Buckeyes and the fact that Meyer's men didn't get to play for the Big Ten championship. Therefore, there is emotional fuel for 2017. What remains to be seen is if the line can hold up, the receiving corps can develop and new defensive heroes can emerge.



J.T. BARRETT

"Recruiting is off the charts. They're going to be able to compete stronger in practice with their twos than some other teams they'll play in conference."
– an opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	21	**Parris Campbell (Jr.)**	11	Austin Mack (So.)
WR	83	Terry McLaurin (Jr.)	9	Binjimen Victor (So.)
HY	30	Demario McCall (So.)	14	K.J. Hill (So.)
LT	74	**Jamarco Jones (Sr.)**	76	Branden Bowen (So.)
LG	73	**Michael Jordan (So.)**	69	Matthew Burrell (So.)
C	54	**Billy Price (Sr.)**	79	Brady Taylor (Jr.)
RG	78	Demetrius Knox (Jr.)	66	Malcolm Pridgeon (Jr.)
RT	59	**Isaiah Prince (Jr.)**	71	Josh Myers (Fr.)
TE	85	**Marcus Baugh (Sr.)**	88	A.J. Alexander (So.)
QB	16	**J.T. Barrett (Sr.)**	10	Joe Burrow (So.)
RB	25	**Mike Weber (So.)**	2	J.K. Dobbins (Fr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	6	**Sam Hubbard (Jr.)**	97	Nick Bosa (So.)
DT	86	**Dre'Mont Jones (So.)**	77	**Michael Hill (Sr.)**
DT	67	Robert Landers (So.)	93	Tracy Sprinkle (Sr.)
DE	59	**Tyquan Lewis (Sr.)**	11	Jalyn Holmes (Sr.)
WLB	17	**Jerome Baker (Jr.)**	47	Justin Hilliard (So.)
MLB	35	**Chris Worley (Sr.)**	5	Baron Browning (Fr.)
SLB	33	Dante Booker (Sr.)	39	Malik Harrison (So.)
CB	3	Damon Arnette (So.)	1	Jeffrey Okudah (Fr.)
CB	12	Denzel Ward (Jr.)	10	Kendall Sheffield (So.)
SS	34	Erick Smith (Sr.)	4	Jordan Fuller (So.)
FS	7	**Damon Webb (Sr.)**	37	Elijaah Goins (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	96	Sean Nuernberger (Jr.)	KR	21	Parris Campbell (Jr.)
P	91	Drue Chrisman (Fr.)	PR	14	K.J. Hill (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: J.T. Barrett, 379-233-2,555-7, 24 TDs
Rushing: Mike Weber, 182 att., 1,096 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Marcus Baugh, 24 rec., 269 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Jerome Baker, 83
Sacks: Tyquan Lewis, 8.0
Interceptions: Jerome Baker, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Urban Meyer
Record at School: 61-6 (5 years)
Career Record: 165-29 (15 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Ryan Day, Kevin Wilson
Defensive Coordinator: Greg Schiano
Columbus, OH • Ohio Stadium (104,944)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

PENN STATE NITTANY LIONS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **6** • BIG TEN EAST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **10-2, 7-2 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Akron
Sept.	9	Pittsburgh
Sept.	16	Georgia State
Sept.	23	at Iowa
Sept.	30	Indiana
Oct.	7	at Northwestern
Oct.	21	Michigan
Oct.	28	at Ohio State
Nov.	4	at Michigan State
Nov.	11	Rutgers
Nov.	18	Nebraska
Nov.	25	at Maryland

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-3, 8-1 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	Kent State	W	33-13
Sept.	10	at Pittsburgh	L	39-42
Sept.	17	Temple	W	34-27
Sept.	24	at Michigan	L	10-49
Oct.	1	Minnesota	(ot) W	29-26
Oct.	8	Maryland	W	38-14
Oct.	22	Ohio State	W	24-21
Oct.	29	at Purdue	W	62-24
Nov.	5	Iowa	W	41-14
Nov.	12	at Indiana	W	45-31
Nov.	19	at Rutgers	W	39-0
Nov.	26	Michigan State	W	45-12
Dec.	3	vs. Wisconsin #	W	38-31
Jan.	2	vs. USC %	L	49-52

#Indianapolis %Rose Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Lamont Wade, DB, Clairton, PA
2. C.J. Thorpe, OL, Glenshaw, PA
3. Sean Clifford, QB, Cincinnati, OH
4. Yetur Gross-Matos, DL, Spotsylvania, VA
5. Fred Hansard, DL, Burlington, NJ
6. Ellis Brooks, LB, Mechanicsville, VA
7. Jonathan Sutherland, DB, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
8. Tariq Castro-Fields, DB, Upper Marlboro, MD
9. Damion Barber, DL, Harrisburg, PA
10. KJ Hamler, WR, Pontiac, MI

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	37.6 ppg	3	21
Rushing	171.9 ypg	7	66
Passing	260.7 ypg	3	36
Total	432.6 ypg	2	49
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.4 ppg	8	47
Rushing	151.3 ypg	8	48
Passing	216.6 ypg	11	50
Total	367.9 ypg	8	37
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.07	8	64

STAT CORNER

3.4

Big play machines: Penn State averaged 3.4 gains of 30-plus yards per game (seventh in FBS) and 2.7 such passes (fifth).

OFFENSE The Nittany Lions enjoyed an offensive breakthrough in 2016 and return a pair of Heisman hopefuls in quarterback Trace McSorley and running back Saquon Barkley. McSorley threw for a school-record 3,614 yards in his debut season, with 29 touchdowns and eight interceptions. His average of 16.1 yards per completion led the nation. Barkley appears poised to pick up where he left off after gouging USC for 194 yards and two touchdowns in the Rose Bowl. The junior already ranks 12th in school history with 2,572 career rushing yards, including 1,496 last year.

The Lions also have a marvelous pass catcher in Mike Gesicki, whose 679 yards as a junior were the most ever by a Penn State tight end. The team will definitely will miss NFL-bound receiver Chris Godwin, but with DaeSean Hamilton, Saeed Blacknall, DeAndre Thompkins and three other scholarship players back, there's depth at wideout.

It also helps that the line is no longer a liability. The Lions return four Rose Bowl starters up front and two other players with extensive starting experience.

DEFENSE Penn State has some holes to fill at defensive end and outside linebacker. But due in part to a wave of injuries, the Lions used a lot of players last fall, so while they're still fairly young, they aren't inexperienced.

Torrence Brown, Shareef Miller and Ryan Buchholz are vying for the starting end spots, with seniors Parker Cothren and Curtis Cothran back at tackle. Manny Bowen and Cam Brown were both thrust into the starting lineup last year at outside linebacker (Brown as a true freshman), and they'll be back this fall. So will senior Jason Cabinda, a two-year starter who ranked third on the team in tackles last season despite missing five games with a wrist injury.

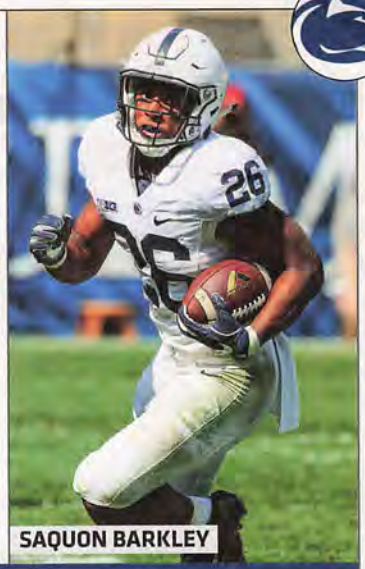
The secondary got a big boost when free safety Marcus Allen announced that he would not be leaving early for the NFL. He's been a starter since the seventh game of his true freshman season, and he was the third-leading tackler in the Big Ten last year with 110 stops.

But the Lions suffered a major loss when standout cornerback John Reid went down with a potentially season-ending injury this spring. Penn State is deep at cornerback, but Reid won't be easily replaced. The other back-end vacancy is at strong safety. Senior Troy Apke is the most experienced contender, but he'll get a challenge from sophomore Ayron Monroe.

SPECIALISTS Penn State returns nearly every noteworthy specialist from last season. Tyler Davis hit 22-of-24 field goal attempts, Joey Julius sent 45 of his 93 kickoffs into the end zone for touchbacks while also flattening a few return men, and Blake Gillikin averaged 42.8 yards per punt. If there's an area where PSU still needs to improve, it's on kickoff and punt returns. The Lions finished 10th in the Big Ten in the former (19.7 yards per attempt) and 11th in the latter (6.5) last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Penn State appears to have the potential, particularly on offense, to approach or maybe even surpass last year's stunning 11–3 finish. Barkley and McSorley are the headliners, but the supporting cast, especially the offensive line, has made major strides, and those players are now versed in the intricacies of coordinator Joe Moorhead's offensive system.

On defense, the losses are more significant, but there, too, the Lions have an abundance of young talent. So while they may not have re-established themselves as perennial powers, they're trending up. Says coach James Franklin: "I think we can continue to build this thing and continue to do special things."



SAQUON BARKLEY

"The Rose Bowl run didn't surprise other coaches. James Franklin has got swagger, and he doesn't care how that projects across the league."
– an opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (10)

WR	3	**DeAndre Thompkins (Jr.)**	84	Juwan Johnson (So.)	
WR	13	**Saeed Blacknall (Sr.)**	11	Irvin Charles (So.)	
WR	5	**DaeSean Hamilton (Sr.)**	10	Brandon Polk (Jr.)	
LT	70	**Brendan Mahon (Sr.)**	52	Ryan Bates (So.)	
LG	52	**Ryan Bates (So.)**	62	Michal Menet (Fr.)	
C	66	**Connor McGovern (So.)**	62	Michal Menet (Fr.)	
RG	57	Steven Gonzalez (So.)	66	Connor McGovern (So.)	
RT	59	**Andrew Nelson (Sr.)**	77	Chasz Wright (Jr.)	
TE	88	**Mike Gesicki (Sr.)**	83	Nick Bowers (So.)	
QB	9	**Trace McSorley (Jr.)**	2	Tommy Stevens (So.)	
RB	26	**Saquon Barkley (Jr.)**	24	Miles Sanders (So.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	19	Torrence Brown (Jr.)	34	Shane Simmons (Fr.)
DT	41	**Parker Cothren (Jr.)**	54	Robert Windsor (So.)
DT	52	**Curtis Cothran (Sr.)**	30	Kevin Givens (So.)
DE	48	Shareef Miller (So.)	97	Ryan Buchholz (So.)
OLB	43	**Manny Bowen (Jr.)**	33	Jake Cooper (Jr.)
ILB	40	**Jason Cabinda (Sr.)**	47	Brandon Smith (Sr.)
OLB	31	Cam Brown (So.)	7	Koa Farmer (Jr.)
CB	15	**Grant Haley (Sr.)**	21	Amani Oruwariye (Jr.)
CB	1	Christian Campbell (Sr.)	38	Lamont Wade (Fr.)
SS	23	Ayron Monroe (So.)	28	Troy Apke (Sr.)
FS	2	**Marcus Allen (Sr.)**	4	Nick Scott (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	95	Tyler Davis (Sr.)	KR	24	Miles Sanders (So.)
P	93	Blake Gillikin (So.)	PR	3	DeAndre Thompkins (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Trace McSorley, 387-224-3,614-8, 29 TDs
Rushing: Saquon Barkley, 272 att., 1,496 yds., 18 TDs
Receiving: Mike Gesicki, 48 rec., 679 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Marcus Allen, 110
Sacks: Kevin Givens, 4.5
Interceptions: Brandon Smith, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: James Franklin
Record at School: 25-15 (3 years)
Career Record: 49-30 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Joe Moorhead
Defensive Coordinator: Brent Pry
University Park, PA • Beaver Stadium (106,572)

Bruce Schwartzman

RUTGERS SCARLET KNIGHTS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **91** • BIG TEN EAST PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 1-8 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Washington	
Sept. 9	Eastern Michigan	
Sept. 16	Morgan State	
Sept. 23	at Nebraska	
Sept. 30	Ohio State	
Oct. 14	at Illinois	
Oct. 21	Purdue	
Oct. 28	at Michigan	
Nov. 4	vs. Maryland #	
Nov. 11	at Penn State	
Nov. 18	at Indiana	
Nov. 25	Michigan State	#Bronx, NY

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 2-10, 0-9 BIG TEN

Sept. 3	at Washington	L	13-48
Sept. 10	Howard	W	52-14
Sept. 17	New Mexico	W	37-28
Sept. 24	Iowa	L	7-14
Oct. 1	at Ohio State	L	0-58
Oct. 8	Michigan	L	0-78
Oct. 15	Illinois	L	7-24
Oct. 22	at Minnesota	L	32-34
Nov. 5	Indiana	L	27-33
Nov. 12	at Michigan State	L	0-49
Nov. 19	Penn State	L	0-39
Nov. 26	at Maryland	L	13-31

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Micah Clark, OL, Cliffwood, NJ
2. Bo Melton, WR, Egg Harbor City, NJ
3. Tyshon Fogg, LB, Baltimore, MD
4. Eddie Lewis, WR, Middletown, NJ
5. Jonathan Lewis, QB, Jersey City, NJ
6. Samuel Vretman, OL, Upplands Vasby, Sweden
7. Olakunle Fatukasi, LB, Far Rockaway, NY
8. Tim Barrow, DB, Staten Island, NY
9. Brendan Bordner, DL, Columbus, OH
10. Shameen Jones, WR, Bronx, NY

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	15.7 ppg	14	127
Rushing	144.9 ypg	12	103
Passing	138.3 ypg	14	122
Total	283.2 ypg	14	128
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	37.5 ppg	13	116
Rushing	264.2 ypg	14	126
Passing	186.5 ypg	4	18
Total	450.7 ypg	14	97
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	10	98

STAT CORNER

2.5

Rutgers averaged just 2.5 gains of 20-plus yards per game in 2016, at least 0.5 such gains fewer than any other team in the nation.

OFFENSE New offensive coordinator Jerry Kill — the former Minnesota head coach and 2014 Big Ten Coach of the Year — will now look to work his magic with a unit that finished last nationally in total offense and next to last in scoring. Quarterback Gio Rescigno, who showed signs of promise starting the final five games, will open as the starter, but highly touted true freshman Jonathan Lewis will be fast-tracked into a prominent role.

Running back Robert Martin (a team-leading 625 rushing yards last year) and Josh Hicks give Rutgers a proven 1-2 punch at the position, with Miami graduate transfer Gus Edwards providing backup help while also handling the new H-back role (along with junior college tight end transfer Jerome Washington).

Skill talent abounds at wide receiver with the return of Janarion Grant, a game-changing threat who missed the final eight games of the 2016 season due to injury. Jawuan Harris had a breakout debut season, leading the team in receptions (39) and receiving yards (481), and the addition of Arkansas transfer Damon Mitchell gives Kill three quality front-line receivers.

Repairing a scarred offensive line from a year ago will be a challenge, although there's returning experience in left tackle Tariq Cole, left guard Dorian Miller and right tackle Kamaal Seymour. The staff is excited about the arrival of true freshmen Micah Clark and Sam Vretman.

DEFENSE With a defensive front that featured three fifth-year starters last season, Rutgers still finished 116th nationally in scoring defense and 126th against the run. But rebuilding that unit hasn't diminished expectations for overall improvement, with the back seven returning intact. Fifth-year senior nose tackle Sebastian Joseph will anchor the line, but it's the play of oft-injured fifth-year senior defensive end Kemoko Turay that holds the key up front. Turay can be a disruptive force when he's on his game.

The struggles at linebacker a year ago were expected with three new starters. The promise shown by Tyreek Maddox-Williams, after he was thrown into the starting mix as a true freshman, gives the Scarlet Knights a rising star on the outside. But the unit needs to be better against the run and account for more tackles for a loss; as a team the Knights had only 66 tackles for a loss in 12 games, 12th in the Big Ten.

Blessuan Austin and Isaiah Wharton, juniors who have combined for 45 career starts, are entrenched at the corner spots. Kiy Hester (strong safety) and Saquan Hampton (free safety) battled through injuries as starters last season. They're being counted on to fill bigger roles now.

SPECIALISTS Grant, back from a broken ankle, is one of the nation's top returners, having already tied the NCAA career record for touchdown returns (five on kickoffs, three on punts). Punter Michael Cintron set a Big Ten record with 95 punts, but his 37.9-yard average prompted the coaching staff to bring in graduate transfer Ryan Anderson, the nation's top Division III punter. Placekicker David Bonagura was 10-of-14 on field goals but lacked range (with a long of 41 yards).

FINAL ANALYSIS Improvement is the goal after a historically bad season — maybe doubling the win total from two to four. Having Washington on the schedule along with Ohio State, Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State and Nebraska is daunting, but getting Purdue and Illinois as crossover conference games helps. The addition of Kill should have a significant impact as well. No bowl is in the offing, but neither is being shut out a combined 224–0 by Ohio State, Michigan, Penn State and Michigan State, as was the case last season.



ROBERT MARTIN

"It's a coin flip which side of the ball needs more work, but they could end up starting a freshman at quarterback, so offense might be it."

– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	1	**Janarion Grant (Sr.)**	Bo Melton (Fr.)
WR	3	**Jawuan Harris (So.)**	6 Mohamed Jabbie (Fr.)
WR	5	Damon Mitchell (Sr.)	23 Dacoven Bailey (So.)
LT	65	**Tariq Cole (Jr.)**	79 Zack Heeman (Jr.)
LG	60	**Dorian Miller (Sr.)**	75 Zach Venesky (So.)
C	73	Jonah Jackson (So.)	74 Sam Howson (Fr.)
RG	71	Marcus Applefield (Jr.)	66 Nick Krimin (Fr.)
RT	54	Kamaal Seymour (So.)	56 Micah Clark (Fr.)
TE	89	Jerome Washington (So.)	86 Nakia Griffin-Stewart (So.)
QB	17	Giovanni Rescigno (Jr.)	Jonathan Lewis (Fr.)
RB	7	**Robert Martin (Sr.)**	8 Josh Hicks (Sr.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	59	**Darnell Davis (Sr.)**	98 Jimmy Hogan (Jr.)
DT	51	**Sebastian Joseph (Sr.)**	92 Eric Wiafe (Jr.)
DT	99	Kevin Wilkins (Jr.)	95 Jon Bateky (Jr.)
DE	58	Kemoko Turay (Sr.)	14 Solomon Manning (Fr.)
OLB	15	**Trevor Morris (Jr.)**	Tyshon Fogg (Fr.)
ILB	26	**Deonte Roberts (Jr.)**	56 Rashawn Battle (Jr.)
OLB	44	**Tyreek Maddox-Williams (So.)**	49 Brandon Rusell (Jr.)
CB	11	**Isaiah Wharton (Jr.)**	18 Damon Hayes (So.)
CB	10	**Blessuan Austin (Jr.)**	21 Ross Douglas (Sr.)
SS	2	Kiy Hester (Jr.)	29 Lawrence Stevens (Fr.)
FS	9	**Saquan Hampton (Jr.)**	17 K.J. Gray (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	David Bonagura (Sr.)	KR	1	Janarion Grant (Sr.)
P	94	Michael Cintron (Jr.)	PR	1	Janarion Grant (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Giovanni Rescigno, 163-86-889-5, 5 TDs
Rushing: Robert Martin, 121 att., 625 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Jawuan Harris, 39 rec., 481 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Trevor Morris, 102
Sacks: Darnell Davis, 2.0; Kemoko Turay, 2.0
Interceptions: Six players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Chris Ash
Record at School: 2-10 (1 year)
Career Record: 2-10 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Jerry Kill
Defensive Coordinators: Bill Busch, Jay Niemann
New Brunswick, NJ • High Point Solutions Stadium (52,454)

AP

ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI

NATIONAL FORECAST: **92** • BIG TEN WEST PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **2-10, 1-8 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Ball State
Sept.	9	Western Kentucky
Sept.	15	at South Florida
Sept.	29	Nebraska
Oct.	7	at Iowa
Oct.	14	Rutgers
Oct.	21	at Minnesota
Oct.	28	Wisconsin
Nov.	4	at Purdue
Nov.	11	Indiana
Nov.	18	at Ohio State
Nov.	25	Northwestern

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-7 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	Murray State	W	52-3
Sept.	10	North Carolina	L	23-48
Sept.	17	Western Michigan	L	10-34
Oct.	1	at Nebraska	L	16-31
Oct.	8	Purdue	(ot) L	31-34
Oct.	15	at Rutgers	W	24-7
Oct.	22	at Michigan	L	8-41
Oct.	29	Minnesota	L	17-40
Nov.	5	Michigan State	W	31-27
Nov.	12	at Wisconsin	L	3-48
Nov.	19	Iowa	L	0-28
Nov.	26	at Northwestern	L	21-42

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Ricky Smalling, WR, Chicago, IL
2. Kendrick Green, DL, Peoria, IL
3. Del'Shawn Phillips, LB, Highland Park, MI*
4. Larry Boyd, OL, Saint Louis, MO
5. Owen Carney Jr., DE, Miami, FL
6. Carmoni Green, WR, Miami, FL
7. Lere Oladipo, DL, Huntley, IL
8. Tony Adams, DB, Belleville, IL
9. Kendall Smith, WR, Bolingbrook, IL
10. Louis Dorsey, TE, Jacksonville, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.7 ppg	13	122
Rushing	140.5 ypg	13	105
Passing	174.6 ypg	11	109
Total	315.1 ypg	13	123
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.9 ppg	12	94
Rushing	219.2 ypg	12	105
Passing	185.9 ypg	3	17
Total	405.1 ypg	11	61
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
-2	-0.17	9	82

STAT CORNER

-4.1

On top of a yardage deficit, Illinois had to deal with a tilted field. Field position margin: minus-4.1 yards per drive (113th in FBS).

OFFENSE If the Illini hope to go bowling this season, improvement will need to start on offense. The 2016 Illini finished 127th in the country in first downs123rd in total offense and 122nd in scoring offense. Two quarterbacks with starting experience — Chayce Crouch and Jeff George Jr. — are in line to replace departed Wes Lunt. In four games, Crouch threw for 249 yards and a touchdown. He ran for another 176 and two more scores. George is the son of Illini great and former No. 1 NFL draft pick Jeff George Sr. In five games, George threw for 470 yards and four TDs.

The coaches are hoping to have another option in 2017. Former Virginia Tech quarterback Dwayne Lawson spent 2016 at Garden City (Kan.) Community College. He made a commitment to Lovie Smith's program but didn't sign while completing his academic work. He hopes to join the Illini during the summer.

The leading returning rusher, Kendrick Foster, enters his senior season looking to build on his 2016 success. Reggie Corbin gained 523 yards in 2016, starting two games.

Two years ago, Mikey Dudek became the first Illini freshman to have more than 1,000 receiving yards. But Dudek hasn't been on the field since, suffering a pair of torn ACLs. He didn't participate in spring drills but is projected to return. With Dudek out, Malik Turner stepped in and led the team with 48 catches. At tight end, redshirt freshman Griffin Palmer is coming off a solid spring. Incoming freshman Louis Dorsey will have a chance to play early.

Tackle Christian DiLauro has made 31 consecutive starts and is one of the leaders of the unit. Center/guard Nick Allegretti adds a vocal component. His ability to play multiple positions has been a plus.

DEFENSE The top four sackmasters graduated. That means an opportunity for the underclassmen. Sophomores Jamal Milan and Kenyon Jackson work inside. Incoming freshman Kendrick Green will have a chance to make an immediate impact. James Crawford, who has played multiple spots, starts at end.

Linebacker Tré Watson is the leading returning tackler and the leader of the unit. JC transfer Del'Shawn Phillips and sophomore Jake Hansen hold down the outside positions.

Because the coaches were forced to use younger players in 2016, the secondary experience is improved, especially at safety. Patrick Nelson and Stanley Green finished third and fifth on the team in tackles, respectively. Senior Jaylen Dunlap returns at cornerback.

SPECIALISTS Illinois needs to replace steady punter Ryan Frain. Junior Ryan Tucker was the only spring option. Former walk-on Chase McLaughlin was 12-of-17 on field goals and perfect on 26 extra points. Looking for an improved return game, the Illini will try incoming freshmen Ricky Smalling and Tony Adams.

FINAL ANALYSIS Illinois regressed across the board in Year 1 under Smith: The Illini won two fewer games, averaged 57.6 fewer yards per game and allowed 54.3 more yards per game. More troubling: Their final five losses came by an average of 30 points.

This team needs significant improvement across the board. "We're trying to take it to that next level," Smith says. "Winning three games, of course, isn't good enough."

Smith will rely heavily on underclassmen in 2017. There are just six seniors on the projected two-deep depth chart. The schedule includes an early trip to AAC favorite South Florida but isn't overly daunting. The Illini travel to Ohio State but don't play Michigan or Penn State. Still, getting to six wins in Year 2 will be a challenge.



MALIK TURNER

"The bottom of the league is going to get better, especially after this offseason. This is the program that could be left behind."
– An oppsoing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	18	Mikey Dudek (Jr.)	9	Sam Mays (Jr.)
WR	11	**Malik Turner (Sr.)**		Ricky Smalling (Fr.)
WR	5	Carmoni Green (Fr.)	84	Dominic Thieman (So.)
LT	66	Jordan Fagan (Sr.)	52	Adam Solomon (So.)
LG	61	Darta Lee (So.)	58	Howard Watkins (Fr.)
C	53	**Nick Allegretti (Jr.)**	75	Kurt Gavin (Fr.)
RG	72	**Gabe Megginson (So.)**		Vederian Lowe (Fr.)
RT	67	**Christian DiLauro (Sr.)**		Larry Boyd (Fr.)
TE	81	Griffin Palmer (Fr.)	13	Caleb Reams (So.)
QB	7	Chayce Crouch (Jr.)	3	Jeff George (So.)
RB	22	**Kendrick Foster (Sr.)**	2	Reggie Corbin (So.)

DEFENSE (3)

DE	47	Sean Adesanya (Jr.)	45	Henry McGrew (Jr.)
DT	55	Jamal Milan (So.)		Kendrick Green (Fr.)
DT	95	Kenyon Jackson (So.)	94	Tito Odenigbo (Jr.)
DE	5	James Crawford (Sr.)	96	Tymir Oliver (So.)
LB	33	**Tré Watson (Jr.)**	9	Dele Harding (So.)
LB	3	Del'Shawn Phillips (Jr.)	2	Julian Jones (Jr.)
LB	35	Jake Hansen (So.)	32	Justice Williams (So.)
CB	1	**Jaylen Dunlap (Sr.)**	23	Frank Sumpter (So.)
CB	31	Cameron Watkins (So.)	26	Evan Jones (Fr.)
S	21	Patrick Nelson (So.)		Dawson DeGroot (Fr.)
S	17	**Stanley Green (So.)**		Tony Adams (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Chase McLaughlin (Jr.)	KR	22	Kendrick Foster (Sr.)
P	40	Ryan Tucker (Jr.)	PR		Ricky Smalling (Fr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jeff George Jr., 94-38-470-5, 4 TDs
Rushing: Kendrick Foster, 126 att., 720 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Malik Turner, 48 rec., 712 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Tré Watson, 102
Sacks: Jamal Milan, 1.0; Tito Odenigbo, 1.0
Interceptions: Julian Hylton, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Lovie Smith
Record at School: 3-9 (1 year)
Career Record: 3-9 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Garrick McGee
Defensive Coordinator: Hardy Nickerson
Champaign, IL • Memorial Stadium (60,670)

Mark Jones/Illinois Athletics

IOWA HAWKEYES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **44** • BIG TEN WEST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 4-5 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Wyoming
Sept.	9	at Iowa State
Sept.	16	North Texas
Sept.	23	Penn State
Sept.	30	at Michigan State
Oct.	7	Illinois
Oct.	21	at Northwestern
Oct.	28	Minnesota
Nov.	4	Ohio State
Nov.	11	at Wisconsin
Nov.	18	Purdue
Nov.	24	at Nebraska

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 6-3 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	Miami (Ohio)	W	45-21
Sept.	10	Iowa State	W	42-3
Sept.	17	North Dakota State	L	21-23
Sept.	24	at Rutgers	W	14-7
Oct.	1	Northwestern	L	31-38
Oct.	8	at Minnesota	W	14-7
Oct.	15	at Purdue	W	49-35
Oct.	22	Wisconsin	L	9-17
Nov.	5	at Penn State	L	14-41
Nov.	12	Michigan	W	14-13
Nov.	19	at Illinois	W	28-0
Nov.	25	Nebraska	W	40-10
Jan.	2	vs. Florida #	L	3-30

#Outback Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. A.J. Epenesa, DL, Edwardsville, IL
2. Tristan Wirfs, OL, Mount Vernon, IA
3. Mark Kallenberger, OL, Bettendorf, IA
4. Djimon Colbert, DB, Shawnee Mission, KS
5. Peyton Mansell, QB, Belton, TX
6. Kyshaun Bryan, RB, Fort Lauderdale, FL
7. Levi Duwa, DE, Wellman, IA
8. Matt Hankins, DB, Flower Mound, TX
9. Brandon Smith, WR, Lake Cormorant, MS
10. Ivory Kelly-Martin, RB, Oswego, IL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.9 ppg	10	95
Rushing	171.8 ypg	8	67
Passing	153.2 ypg	13	118
Total	325.0 ypg	12	121
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	18.8 ppg	4	13
Rushing	149.8 ypg	7	45
Passing	201.4 ypg	5	29
Total	351.2 ypg	5	23
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.46	6	28

STAT CORNER

10.8

No big plays: Iowa averaged just 10.8 gains per game of 10-plus yards (124th in FBS) but allowed only 10.7 such gains (sixth).

OFFENSE Change was the theme on offense during the offseason. Iowa has a new offensive coordinator with Brian Ferentz replacing Greg Davis, who retired from coaching shortly after last season. Brian Ferentz is the 34-year-old son of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and a former Hawkeye offensive lineman.

There is hope that Brian Ferentz will install an offense that tries to attack more downfield compared to Davis' preference to use shorter routes.

Iowa also has a new quarterbacks coach in Ken O'Keefe and will have a new starting quarterback with the C.J. Beathard era now over. The competition between sophomore Nathan Stanley and junior Tyler Wiegers was unsettled after spring practice.

Receiver is a major concern. Senior receiver Matt VandeBerg missed all of spring practice after reinjuring the same foot that caused him to miss the final nine games last season. His availability will be crucial as Iowa breaks in a new quarterback. The team's second-most experienced receiver, junior Jerminic Smith, was suspended from spring practice because of academic shortcomings, leaving his status uncertain.

What hasn't changed much is the strength up front. Iowa returns five starters from a unit that won the Joe Moore Award as the nation's top offensive line last season.

Senior running back Akrum Wadley also returns after rushing for 1,081 yards (on a 6.4-yard average) last season.

DEFENSE All three starters at linebacker from last season return, including middle linebacker Josey Jewell, who earned second-team All-Big Ten honors for the second straight year. Defensive end also could be a strength with the top three players from last season returning.

But on the flipside, Iowa has to replace three starters in the secondary, including 2015 Jim Thorpe Award winner Desmond King, and All-Big Ten defensive tackle Jaleel Johnson, who was a disruptive force last season.

Sophomore cornerback Manny Rugamba showed star potential while starting three games last season. He had an interception in the second half against Michigan that helped to secure the 14–13 upset.

Senior Nathan Bazata also returns at defensive tackle, where he has started in each of the past two seasons. Bazata isn't quite as dynamic as Johnson, but he's effective when healthy, especially against the run.

SPECIALISTS Keith Duncan will forever hold a special place in the history of Iowa football thanks to his game-winning field as time expired against Michigan. The biggest concern with Duncan at this stage is his range. He made his only field goal attempt from beyond 40 yards last season as Iowa usually opted to punt or use backup kicker Miguel Recinos on long field goals. Sophomore Colten Rastetter is the leading candidate to take over at punter.

FINAL ANALYSIS There is lot to be encouraged about on both offense and defense, but for every strength, there seems to be a matching weakness. Iowa is loaded on the offensive line and also has a star running back in Wadley. But there is little proven depth at receiver, and none of the quarterbacks has started a game. Combine that with having to replace three starters in the secondary, along with the starting punter, and much of the team is unproven at this point.

The schedule also could be tricky as Iowa hosts a respectable Wyoming team in the season opener before facing Iowa State in Ames. Ohio State also returns to the schedule for the first time since 2013.

A winning record coupled with yet another bowl game appearance seems within reach. But Iowa has too many uncertainties at this stage to be considered a contender in the Big Ten West Division.



JOSEY JEWELL

"(Kirk) Ferentz wants to beat you up, make a single-possession lead feel a lot worse. ... They specialize in tough football players."
– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	89	Matt VandeBerg (Sr.)	82	Adrian Falconer (Jr.)
WR	80	Devonte Young (So.)	84	Nick Easley (Jr.)
LT	54	**Boone Myers (Sr.)**	77	Alaric Jackson (Fr.)
LG	69	**Keegan Render (Jr.)**	59	Ross Reynolds (Jr.)
C	78	**James Daniels (Jr.)**	70	Lucas LeGrand (Jr.)
RG	79	**Sean Welsh (Sr.)**	66	Levi Paulsen (So.)
RT	75	**Ike Boettger (Sr.)**	76	Dalton Ferguson (Jr)
TE	86	**Peter Pekar (Sr.)**	87	Noah Fant (So.)
QB	4	Nathan Stanley (So.)	8	Tyler Wiegers (Jr.)
RB	25	Akrum Wadley (Sr.)	22	Toks Akinribade (So.)
FB	36	Brady Ross (So.)	33	Austin Kelly (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	98	Anthony Nelson (So.)	**96**	**Matt Nelson (Jr.)**
LT	95	Cedrick Lattimore (So.)	91	Brady Reiff (So.)
RT	99	**Nathan Bazata (Sr.)**	88	Jake Hulett (Sr.)
RE	40	**Parker Hesse (Jr.)**		A.J. Epenesa (Fr.)
OLB	44	**Ben Niemann (Sr.)**	26	Kevin Ward (Sr.)
MLB	43	**Josey Jewell (Sr.)**	48	Jack Hockaday (Jr.)
WLB	41	**Bo Bower (Sr.)**	52	Amani Jones (So.)
CB	15	Joshua Jackson (Jr.)	11	Michael Ojemudia (So.)
CB	5	Manny Rugamba (So.)	20	Cedric Boswell (Fr.)
SS	19	**Miles Taylor (Sr.)**	27	Amani Hooker (So.)
FS	30	Jake Gervase (Jr.)	27	Amani Hooker (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	3	Keith Duncan (So.)	KR	80	Devonte Young (So.)
P	7	Colten Rastetter (So.)	PR	89	Matt VandeBerg (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nathan Stanley, 9-5-62-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Akrum Wadley, 168 att., 1,081 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Akrum Wadley, 36 rec., 315 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Josey Jewell, 124
Sacks: Anthony Nelson, 6.0
Interceptions: Brandon Snyder, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Kirk Ferentz
Record at School: 135-92 (18 years)
Career Record: 147-113 (21 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brian Ferentz
Defensive Coordinator: Phil Parker
Iowa City, IA • Kinnick Stadium (70,585)

Tom Lynn

MINNESOTA GOLDEN GOPHERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **50** • BIG TEN WEST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-5 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	Buffalo
Sept.	9	at Oregon State
Sept.	16	Middle Tennessee
Sept.	30	Maryland
Oct.	7	at Purdue
Oct.	14	Michigan State
Oct.	21	Illinois
Oct.	28	at Iowa
Nov.	4	at Michigan
Nov.	11	Nebraska
Nov.	18	at Northwestern
Nov.	25	Wisconsin

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 5-4 BIG TEN

Sept.	1	Oregon State	W	30-23
Sept.	10	Indiana State	W	58-28
Sept.	24	Colorado State	W	31-24
Oct.	1	at Penn State (ot)	L	26-29
Oct.	8	Iowa	L	7-14
Oct.	15	at Maryland	W	31-10
Oct.	22	Rutgers	W	34-32
Oct.	29	at Illinois	W	40-17
Nov.	5	Purdue	W	44-31
Nov.	12	at Nebraska	L	17-24
Nov.	19	Northwestern	W	29-12
Nov.	26	at Wisconsin	L	17-31
Dec.	27	vs. Washington State #	W	17-12

#Holiday Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Blaise Andries, OL, Marshall, MN
2. Ken Handy-Holly, DB, Jackson, AL
3. Demetrius Douglas, WR, Portland, OR
4. Adam Beck, DB, Richmond, TX
5. Chris Autman-Bell, WR, Kankakee, IL
6. Jake Paulson, TE, Louisville, KY
7. John Michael Schmitz, OL, Flossmoor, IL
8. Malcolm Robinson, DL, Massillon, OH
9. Mohamed Ibrahim, RB, Olney, MD
10. Tanner Morgan, QB, Union, KY

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.3 ppg	4	63
Rushing	183.6 ypg	5	54
Passing	173.6 ypg	12	111
Total	357.2 ypg	11	107
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.1 ppg	5	21
Rushing	117.8 ypg	2	14
Passing	230.9 ypg	13	73
Total	348.8 ypg	4	21
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
+8	+0.62	4	18

STAT CORNER

4.3

Minnesota allowed just 4.3 yards per play on first down, best in FBS and a high bar for new defensive coordinator Robb Smith.

OFFENSE Head coach P.J. Fleck and his staff aren't the only new faces in Minnesota, as the Gophers have to replace longtime quarterback Mitch Leidner, leading wide receiver Drew Wolitarsky and three offensive linemen with starting experience heading into 2017. It's a good thing standout running backs Rodney Smith and Shannon Brooks return to shoulder the bulk of the offensive workload. Smith was second in the Big Ten with 16 rushing touchdowns in 2016, and Brooks, who missed a few games last season, has a knack for breaking off big runs. Both averaged 4.7 or more yards per carry last season.

"They showed why … they are really good backs and how they can continue to become elite," Fleck says. "They make some runs, too, that wow."

At quarterback, Conor Rhoda (one career start) and Demry Croft (none) are the two frontrunners to win the job. Both have attempted 17 career passes heading into '17. Fleck and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Kirk Ciarrocca have each said that a starter might not be named until mid-August.

The receivers haven't caught a lot of passes, but they figure to benefit from the tutelage of position coach Matt Simon and Fleck, a former college and pro wideout. Rashad Still is the most productive returning receiver, but he had only 18 receptions in 2016.

DEFENSE The defense will be led by its deep linebacking corps, most notably Jonathan Celestin in the middle. He had 80 tackles in 2016 and has paid multiple visits to Fleck's office to find out how he can be a better leader.

Defensive tackle Steven Richardson, at 6'0", 300 pounds, will work to keep Celestin free to roam while also wreaking havoc himself. He had a team-high 11 tackles for a loss as well as 7.0 sacks in 2016.

Without much depth along the defensive line, new defensive coordinator Robb Smith — who was at Arkansas last year — will need to be flexible and transition from his preferred 4-3 to a modified 3-4 to cover up the lack of size on the line.

Some impact sophomores are expected to be Carter Coughlin and Tai'yon Devers at rush end and Kamal Martin and Thomas Barber at linebacker.

Fleck is enamored with sophomore Antoine Winfield Jr., whose dad had a long NFL career. Winfield will provide instincts that can be invaluable at safety or cornerback.

SPECIALISTS Emmit Carpenter won Big Ten Kicker of the Year for making 92 percent of his attempts (22-of-24) in 2016. He was 10-of-10 from 40 yards and beyond. Punter Ryan Santoso had a 40.9-yard average, and 38 percent of his punts ended up inside the 20-yard line. It will be an open competition to see who wins the returner duties after burner Jalen Myrick left for the NFL.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Gophers went 9–4 and beat Washington State 17–12 in the Holiday Bowl last season, but this year's squad could take a step back. Fleck's team will face a harder schedule, as Michigan essentially replaces Rutgers on the slate.

There's also uncertainty with a lack of experience at quarterback and a lack of depth along the offensive and defensive lines as well as in the secondary. If they can shore up those questions and can get past Oregon State in Corvallis on Sept. 9, a 5–0 mark is attainable heading into the home game against Michigan State on Oct. 14.

Fleck has a track record for taking teams to unforeseeable heights. He took Western Michigan from 1–11 in 2013 to back-to-back 8–5 campaigns before a breakthrough to 13–1 and a Cotton Bowl berth against Wisconsin in 2016.



RODNEY SMITH

"(P.J. Fleck) has got that kind of enthusiasm that, even though us as coaches think it's corny, it works with the players."

– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	6	Tyler Johnson (So.)	5	Melvin Holland (Jr.)	
WR	88	**Rashad Still (Jr.)**	2	Isaiah Gentry (Jr.)	
WR	9	Eric Carter (Sr.)	12	Hunter Register (So.)	
LT	73	**Donnell Greene (Jr.)**		Blaise Andries (Fr.)	
LG	76	**Vincent Calhoun (Sr.)**	61	Bronson Dovich (So.)	
C	64	Conner Olson (Fr.)	62	Jared Weyler (Jr.)	
RG	62	**Jared Weyler (Jr.)**	58	Quinn Oseland (So.)	
RT	78	**Garrison Wright (Sr.)**	74	Nick Connelly (So.)	
TE	80	**Nate Wozniak (Sr.)**	86	Brandon Lingen (Sr.)	
QB	15	Conor Rhoda (Sr.)	11	Demry Croft (So.)	
RB	1	**Rodney Smith (Jr.)**	23	Shannon Brooks (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	45	Carter Coughlin (So.)	92	Tai'yon Devers (So.)
DT	96	**Steven Richardson (Sr.)**	93	Merrick Jackson (Sr.)
DT	99	Andrew Stelter (Sr.)	19	Gary Moore (Jr.)
DE	46	Winston DeLattiboudere (So.)	94	Jerry Gibson (Jr.)
LB	49	Kamal Martin (So.)	36	Blake Cashman (Jr.)
LB	13	**Jonathan Celestin (Sr.)**	35	Jaylen Waters (So.)
LB	41	Thomas Barber (So.)	12	Cody Poock (Sr.)
CB	34	Antonio Shenault (Jr.)	4	Adekunle Ayinde (Sr.)
CB	31	Kiondre Thomas (Fr.)	14	Zo Craighton (So.)
SS	11	**Antoine Winfield Jr. (So.)**	17	Jacob Huff (Jr.)
FS	8	**Duke McGhee (Sr.)**		Ken Handy-Holly (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	38	Emmit Carpenter (Jr.)	KR	1	Rodney Smith (Jr.)
P	18	Ryan Santoso (Sr.)	PR	34	Antonio Shenault (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Conor Rhoda, 16-8-88-0, 1 TD
Rushing: Rodney Smith, 240 att., 1,158 yds., 16 TDs
Receiving: Rodney Smith, 23 rec., 188 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: Jonathan Celestin, 80
Sacks: Blake Cashman, 7.5
Interceptions: 4 players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: P.J. Fleck
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 30-22 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kirk Ciarrocca
Defensive Coordinator: Robb Smith
Minneapolis, MN • TCF Bank Stadium (50,805)

Bruce Schwartzman

NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **43** • BIG TEN WEST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-4 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Arkansas State
Sept.	9	at Oregon
Sept.	16	Northern Illinois
Sept.	23	Rutgers
Sept.	29	at Illinois
Oct.	7	Wisconsin
Oct.	14	Ohio State
Oct.	28	at Purdue
Nov.	4	Northwestern
Nov.	11	at Minnesota
Nov.	18	at Penn State
Nov.	24	Iowa

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 6-3 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	Fresno State	W	43-10
Sept.	10	Wyoming	W	52-17
Sept.	17	Oregon	W	35-32
Sept.	24	at Northwestern	W	24-13
Oct.	1	Illinois	W	31-16
Oct.	15	at Indiana	W	27-22
Oct.	22	Purdue	W	27-14
Oct.	29	at Wisconsin (ot)	L	17-23
Nov.	5	at Ohio State	L	3-62
Nov.	12	Minnesota	W	24-17
Nov.	19	Maryland	W	28-7
Nov.	25	at Iowa	L	10-40
Dec.	30	vs. Tennessee #	L	24-38

#Music City Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tyjon Lindsey, WR, Corona, CA
2. Elijah Blades, DB, Pasadena, CA
3. Avery Roberts, LB, Wilmington, DE
4. Tristan Gebbia, QB, Calabasas, CA
5. Jaevon McQuitty, WR, Columbia, MO
6. Keyshawn Johnson Jr., WR, Calabasas, CA
7. Brenden Jaimes, OL, Austin, TX
8. Deiontae Watts, DL, Plano, TX
9. Deontre Thomas, DL, Mustang, OK
10. Matt Sichterman, OL, Kings Mills, OH

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.5 ppg	6	79
Rushing	169.2 ypg	9	73
Passing	211.7 ypg	8	86
Total	380.8 ypg	9	90
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	23.9 ppg	7	33
Rushing	147.8 ypg	6	43
Passing	215.8 ypg	10	49
Total	363.7 ypg	6	30
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
+5	+0.38	7	34

STAT CORNER

3-0

Nebraska went 3-0 in one-possession games after going 2-6 in such games in 2015. The Huskers' peripherals fell, but the win total rose.

OFFENSE With the departure of Tommy Armstrong Jr., who started more games than any quarterback in Husker history, the offense will be different — more like what coach Mike Riley ran at Oregon State, with fewer designed quarterback runs. "We want a passer," Riley says. "If that guy can run, too, that's really good." But passing is the priority. Tulane transfer Tanner Lee provides that, as does redshirt freshman Patrick O'Brien. Lee has starting experience, however, which gives him the advantage. Don't expect 35 drop-back passes per game. Riley's system is controlled passing.

Nebraska must run the ball better, which might be accomplished by committee, at least early on. The three returning running backs had fewer carries combined than last year's starter, Terrell Newby. Devine Ozigbo got far and away the most of that group. Tre Bryant is the best blocker, which is an important consideration, while Mikale Wilbon might be the most elusive runner.

The receiving corps was depleted by graduation, but Stanley Morgan Jr. and De'Mornay Pierson-El are proven playmakers. Four of five offensive linemen who started the Music City Bowl return.

DEFENSE Riley fired defensive coordinator Mark Banker, with whom he had worked for 20 years including 14 as coordinator, and replaced him with former Connecticut head coach Bob Diaco, who has replaced the 4-3 with a 3-4 base alignment. Cornerbacks coach Donte Williams and safeties coach Bob Elliott also are new.

Mick Stoltenberg is 20 to 25 pounds heavier than a year ago and has the strength to play nose tackle. Carlos Davis, another 300-pounder who saw significant playing time with four starts at tackle as a redshirt freshman, is alongside Stoltenberg.

Diaco is working with the linebackers, along with Trent Bray, and is counting on Dedrick Young II and Marcus Newby to provide leadership at a position with talented but inexperienced youngsters and players adjusting to new roles in the 3-4.

The Huskers are deepest on defense in the secondary, with Joshua Kalu, Chris Jones, Aaron Williams and Kieron Williams leading the way. Kieron Williams, the top returning tackler and leading interceptor last season, has been pushed by talented young safeties.

SPECIALISTS Riley also fired special teams coordinator Bruce Read, with whom he had worked for 16 years, and now handles special teams by committee. Placekicker Drew Brown is a rather ordinary 17-of-24 from 40 to 49 yards in his career. Punter Caleb Lightbourn expected to redshirt as a freshman but stepped in following the death of Sam Foltz just before the start of fall camp in 2106. Lightbourn, who averaged 39.7 yards, needs to be more consistent.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Huskers improved from 6–7 to 9–4 in Riley's second season, although the improvement could be partially attributed to better breaks. Plus, the four losses came in the final six games. After battling Wisconsin to overtime, they lost at Ohio State 62–3, at Iowa 40–10 and to Tennessee in the Music City Bowl 38–24, allowing a combined 1,519 yards of offense in those games, leading to Banker's firing. A year ago, Riley fired defensive line coach Hank Hughes. Despite his nice-guy personality, Riley has shown a hard edge in trying to get this team to where he wants it.

Nebraska hasn't won a conference championship since 1999 and has played in only one Big Ten Championship Game — a 70–31 loss to Wisconsin in 2012. With so many changes on offense, defense and special teams, the Huskers would seem to be long shots to play in a second this season.



CHRIS JONES

"They're not (recruiting) in Florida and Texas and California the way they did in their glory years. That's the big secret to why they've fallen off."
– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	8	**Stanley Morgan Jr. (Jr.)**	10	JD Spielman (Fr.)
WR	83	Bryan Reimers (Jr.)	4	Jaevon McQuitty (Fr.)
WR	15	**De'Mornay Pierson-El (Sr.)**	9	Keyan Williams (Jr.)
LT	68	**Nick Gates (Jr.)**	71	Matt Farniok (Fr.)
LG	67	Jerald Foster (Jr.)	50	John Raridon (Fr.)
C	79	Michael Decker (So.)	62	Cole Conrad (Jr.)
RG	63	**Tanner Farmer (Jr.)**	56	Boe Wilson (Fr.)
RT	77	**David Knevel (Sr.)**	65	Christian Gaylord (So.)
TE	88	Tyler Hoppes (Sr.)	85	Matt Snyder (So.)
QB	13	Tanner Lee (Jr.)	12	Patrick O'Brien (Fr.)
RB	21	Mikale Wilbon (Jr.)	18	Tre Bryant (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	91	**Freedom Akinmoladun (Jr.)**	9	DaiShon Neal (So.)
NT	44	**Mick Stoltenberg (Jr.)**	94	Khalil Davis (So.)
DE	96	Carlos Davis (So.)	99	Peyton Newell (Jr.)
OLB	3	Marcus Newby (Sr.)	22	Alex Davis (So.)
ILB	5	**Dedrick Young II (Jr.)**	7	Mohamed Barry (So.)
ILB	49	Chris Weber (Sr.)	30	Quayshon Alexander (Fr.)
OLB	12	Luke Gifford (Jr.)	17	Sedrick King (Jr.)
CB	1	Lamar Jackson (So.)	23	Dicaprio Bootle (Fr.)
CB	8	**Chris Jones (Sr.)**	6	Eric Lee Jr. (So.)
S	24	**Aaron Williams (Jr.)**	16	Antonio Reed (Jr.)
S	10	**Joshua Kalu (Sr.)**	26	**Kieron Williams (Sr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	34	Drew Brown (Sr.)	KR	18	Tre Bryant (So.)
P	35	Caleb Lightbourn (So.)	PR	15	D. Pierson-El (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Zack Darlington, 6-2-14-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Devine Ozigbo, 97 att., 412 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Stanley Morgan Jr., 33 rec., 453 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Kieron Williams, 69
Sacks: Freedom Akinmoladun, 3.0
Interceptions: Kieron Williams, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Riley
Record at School: 15-11 (2 years)
Career Record: 108-91 (16 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Danny Langsdorf
Defensive Coordinator: Bob Diaco
Lincoln, NE • Memorial Stadium (86,047)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

NORTHWESTERN WILDCATS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **41** • BIG TEN WEST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 5-4 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Nevada	
Sept. 9	at Duke	
Sept. 16	Bowling Green	
Sept. 30	at Wisconsin	
Oct. 7	Penn State	
Oct. 14	at Maryland	
Oct. 21	Iowa	
Oct. 28	Michigan State	
Nov. 4	at Nebraska	
Nov. 11	Purdue	
Nov. 18	Minnesota	
Nov. 25	at Illinois	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 5-4 BIG TEN

Sept. 3	Western Michigan	L	21-22
Sept. 10	Illinois State	L	7-9
Sept. 17	Duke	W	24-13
Sept. 24	Nebraska	L	13-24
Oct. 1	at Iowa	W	38-31
Oct. 15	at Michigan State	W	54-40
Oct. 22	Indiana	W	24-14
Oct. 29	at Ohio State	L	20-24
Nov. 5	Wisconsin	L	7-21
Nov. 12	at Purdue	W	45-17
Nov. 19	at Minnesota	L	12-29
Nov. 26	Illinois	W	42-21
Dec. 28	vs. Pittsburgh #	W	31-24

#Pinstripe Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Earnest Brown IV, DE, Aubrey, TX
2. Sam Miller, DT, Houston, TX
3. Trevor Kent, DE, Pittsburg, KS
4. J.R. Pace, S, College Park, GA
5. Rashawn Slater, OL, Sugar Land, TX
6. Trey Pugh, SB, Plain City, OH
7. Sam Gerak, OL, Avon, OH
8. Blake Gallagher, LB, Raynham, MA
9. Austin Hiller, S, Lakeway, TX
10. Peter McIntyre, LB, Perrysburg, OH

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.0 ppg	7	87
Rushing	153.2 ypg	10	91
Passing	245.1 ypg	4	53
Total	398.2 ypg	5	73
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.2 ppg	6	24
Rushing	139.2 ypg	5	30
Passing	265.2 ypg	14	109
Total	404.4 ypg	10	60
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
+9	+0.69	3	14

STAT CORNER

2-3

In 2015, Northwestern went 5-0 in games decided by one possession. In 2016: 2-3. The team was about the same otherwise.

OFFENSE Northwestern's coaches are both bullish on why the offense can become more dynamic and blunt about why the unit could struggle. The skill position pieces appear to be in place, especially at running back, but if things don't improve up front, it will be a slog. "We've got to be more consistent," coach Pat Fitzgerald says. "We have to have competitive depth. Two years ago, we had that and we won 10 games. Last year, we didn't have that, and it was painfully obvious at times."

Guard Tommy Doles will lead the group, and Fitzgerald is hoping for steadier play from left tackle Blake Hance and center Brad North. The line can create rushing lanes — Northwestern rushed for 526 yards and eight touchdowns in its final two games of 2016 — but must improve substantially in protection after allowing 39 sacks last season and 102 over the past three seasons.

Northwestern features one of the nation's more underrated backfields in Justin Jackson, who soon will become the school's all-time leading rusher, and Clayton Thorson, 17–9 as the team's starting quarterback. Wide receiver once again is a question after the departure of Biletnikoff Award finalist Austin Carr, but superback (Northwestern's version of tight end) Garrett Dickerson should contend for All-Big Ten honors. Oregon transfer Jalen Brown could spark an offense that has produced only 85 completions of 20 yards or longer since 2014, third fewest among Power 5 teams.

DEFENSE Northwestern should remain a defense-driven team, as both the line and secondary are arguably the deepest in Fitzgerald's tenure. A series of medical retirements at linebacker could result in Northwestern using a 4-2-5 base alignment, which it featured frequently in recent years.

"We've got a lot coming back," Fitzgerald says. "We've got to identify our best 11 and then some."

The line goes two and often three deep at every position. Veterans Tyler Lancaster and Jordan Thompson lead arguably the best group of tackles in Fitzgerald's tenure. The coaches like the edge-rushing speed of Xavier Washington, Joe Gaziano and redshirt freshman Mark Gooden, who stood out in the spring.

Northwestern doesn't lack playmakers in the back end. Cornerback Montre Hartage returns after recording five interceptions in 2016, and veteran safeties Godwin Igwebuike, Kyle Queiro and Jared McGee combined for seven interceptions last fall. The Wildcats also regain cornerback Keith Watkins II from injury. "He's an All-Big Ten-level player," Fitzgerald says.

SPECIALISTS The Wildcats return veteran punter Hunter Niswander and dynamic kickoff returner Solomon Vault, who has four career return touchdowns. Fitzgerald lost confidence in the team's placekicking last season — a league-low 12 field goal attempts — and needs new blood there, likely Mason Weissenhofer or incoming freshman Charlie Kuhbander.

FINAL ANALYSIS After recording multiple 10-win seasons and multiple bowl wins since 2012, Northwestern now hopes to contend in the Big Ten West. The return of 15 starters and a fairly favorable schedule (no Ohio State nor Michigan) suggests that this is the season to make a move. But a larger indicator, according to Fitzgerald, is how many starters will be pushed or displaced by others. Northwestern must show it can handle inevitable injuries as well as underperforming play better than it did early last season.

Consecutive games against West Division winner Wisconsin (road) and league champion Penn State (home) on Sept. 30 and Oct. 7 should show whether Northwestern is for real or not.



JUSTIN JACKSON

"Defensively, they do some great stuff. They put guys out there who can adjust quickly. They don't get confused by your stuff before the snap."
— An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	17	Jalen Brown (Jr.)	15	Macan Wilson (Sr.)
WR	2	**Flynn Nagel (Jr.)**	88	Ben Skowronek (So.)
WR	4	Solomon Vault (Sr.)	19	Riley Lees (Fr.)
LT	72	**Blake Hance (Jr.)**	75	Ben Oxley (Jr.)
LG	59	**J.B. Butler (Jr.)**		Trey Klock (Jr.)
C	69	**Brad North (Sr.)**	65	Jared Thomas (So.)
RG	71	**Tommy Doles (Jr.)**	57	Cam Kolwich (Fr.)
RT	73	Gunnar Vogel (Fr.)	64	Andrew Otterman (So.)
SB	9	**Garrett Dickerson (Sr.)**	84	Cameron Green (So.)
QB	18	**Clayton Thorson (Jr.)**	7	Matt Alviti (Sr.)
RB	21	**Justin Jackson (Sr.)**	20	John Moten IV (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	56	**Xavier Washington (Sr.)**	55	Mark Gooden (Fr.)
DT	67	**Tyler Lancaster (Sr.)**	95	Alex Miller (So.)
DT	99	**Jordan Thompson (Jr.)**	92	Fred Wyatt (Jr.)
DE	97	Joe Gaziano (So.)	54	Trent Goens (So.)
LB	32	**Nate Hall (Jr.)**	50	Jango Glackin (Fr.)
LB	45	Nathan Fox (So.)	42	Paddy Fisher (Fr.)
LB	10	Brett Walsh (Sr.)	13	Warren Long (Sr.)
CB	3	Keith Watkins II (Jr.)	12	Alonzo Mayo (So.)
CB	24	**Montre Hartage (Jr.)**	27	Roderick Campbell (So.)
S	16	**Godwin Igwebuike (Sr.)**	47	Joe Bergin (So.)
S	21	**Kyle Queiro (Sr.)**	41	Jared McGee (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	39	Mason Weissenhofer (So.)	KR	4	Solomon Vault (Sr.)
P	96	Hunter Niswander (Sr.)	PR	2	Flynn Nagel (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Clayton Thorson, 478-280-3,182-9, 22 TDs
Rushing: Justin Jackson, 298 att., 1,524 yds., 15 TDs
Receiving: Flynn Nagel, 40 rec., 447 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Godwin Igwebuike, 108
Sacks: Xavier Washington, Joe Gaziano, 4.5
Interceptions: Montre Hartage, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Pat Fitzgerald
Record at School: 77-62 (11 years)
Career Record: 77-62 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mick McCall
Defensive Coordinator: Mike Hankwitz
Evanston, IL • Ryan Field (47,130)

AP

PURDUE BOILERMAKERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **84** • BIG TEN WEST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-7 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Louisville #	
Sept. 8	Ohio	
Sept. 16	at Missouri	
Sept. 23	Michigan	
Oct. 7	Minnesota	
Oct. 14	at Wisconsin	
Oct. 21	at Rutgers	
Oct. 28	Nebraska	
Nov. 4	Illinois	
Nov. 11	at Northwestern	
Nov. 18	at Iowa	
Nov. 25	Indiana	

#Indianapolis, IN

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 1-8 BIG TEN

Sept. 3	Eastern Kentucky	W	45-24
Sept. 10	Cincinnati	L	20-38
Sept. 24	Nevada	W	24-14
Oct. 1	at Maryland	L	7-50
Oct. 8	at Illinois	(ot) W	34-31
Oct. 15	Iowa	L	35-49
Oct. 22	at Nebraska	L	14-27
Oct. 29	Penn State	L	24-62
Nov. 5	at Minnesota	L	31-44
Nov. 12	Northwestern	L	17-45
Nov. 19	Wisconsin	L	20-49
Nov. 26	at Indiana	L	24-26

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. T.J. Jallow, DB, Olive Branch, MS*
2. Nick Sipe, QB, Villa Park, CA
3. Dedrick Mackey, DB, Miami, FL
4. Tyler Hamilton, WR, Hilton Head, SC
5. DJ Edwards, WR, West Palm Beach, FL
6. Isaac Zico, WR, Villa Rica, GA*
7. Viktor Beach, OL, Fort Myers, FL
8. Darius Pittman, TE, Bay St. Louis, MS
9. Griffin Alstott, QB, St. Petersburg, FL
10. Ethan Smart, OL, Southaven, MS*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.6 ppg	11	101
Rushing	96.2 ypg	14	125
Passing	294.9 ypg	1	21
Total	391.1 ypg	7	80
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	38.3 ppg	14	117
Rushing	238.4 ypg	13	115
Passing	207.4 ypg	8	38
Total	445.8 ypg	13	91
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
-17	-1.42	14	128

STAT CORNER

4.3/6.1

The Purdue offense averaged 4.3 gains per game of 20-plus yards (96th in FBS). The Boilers' defense allowed 6.1 such plays per game (115th).

OFFENSE In junior David Blough, Purdue returns the Big Ten's leading passer (3,352 yards and 25 touchdowns), and in Markell Jones, D.J. Knox, Richie Worship, Brian Lankford-Johnson and Tario Fuller, the Boilermakers have a talented and varied collection of running backs to help first-year coach Jeff Brohm implement the high-powered offense he brought with from Western Kentucky. Brohm went 30–10 overall and won two Conference USA titles while establishing more than 75 school records in his brief stop in Bowling Green, Ky.

There are two significant areas of concern — the offensive line struggled last year and didn't show many positive signs in the spring, and the receiving corps lacks playmakers. Tight ends Cole Herdman and Brycen Hopkins combined for 45 catches for 527 yards and could be featured prominently in the fall. The Boilermakers also hope to get a boost from Corey Holmes, a graduate transfer from Notre Dame who caught 11 passes for the Fighting Irish in 2016.

The offensive line gave up 11 sacks in the spring game and is searching for dependable options to team with junior center Kirk Barron.

DEFENSE With six returning starters, including leading 2016 tackler Markus Bailey, who made 97 stops at linebacker as a true freshman, Purdue should be much improved on this side of the ball after allowing 38 points or more seven times last season. Bailey will be joined at linebacker by Danny Ezechukwu and Ja'Whaun Bentley, who combined for 102 tackles last season.

The Boilermakers are deep at defensive end with Austin Larkin, Antoine Miles and newcomers Kai Higgins and Rob Simmons, each of whom played well in Purdue's spring game. The tackles will include senior Gelen Robinson, the son of former Purdue and NBA standout Glenn Robinson, Eddy Wilson and Lorenzo Neal. Robinson made 61 tackles in 2016, and Wilson had 36, including six for a loss.

Purdue's secondary allowed opponents to complete 59 percent of their passes for 22 TDs last season, but that group will be bolstered by hard-hitting junior college transfer safety T.J. Jallow and by fifth-year graduate transfer Josh Okonye from Wake Forest. They will join corners Da'Wan Hunte and Tim Cason, along with safety Navon Mosley.

SPECIALISTS In sophomore placekicker J.D. Dellinger and junior punter Joe Schopper, the Boilermakers have two of the Big Ten's best specialists. After making only two of his first five field goal attempts as a freshman, Dellinger made eight of his final nine to finish 10-of-14 (71.4 percent) with a long of 42 yards. Schopper punted 56 times for a 40.7-yard average, with 24 downed inside the 20-yard line and eight of 50 yards or longer. Malik Kimbrough and Lankford-Johnson are the likely kick returners.

FINAL ANALYSIS Brohm was hired in December to replace the fired Darrell Hazell, who was 9–33 in three-plus seasons with the Boilermakers, including only 3–24 in the Big Ten and a horrific 0–14 in the month of November.

While Brohm has a talented and experienced quarterback in Blough, Purdue's September schedule isn't exactly conducive to a quick turnaround. The Boilermakers open on Sept. 2 against Louisville in Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium before playing Ohio University in West Lafayette, then travel to Missouri before entertaining Michigan on Sept. 23.

Brohm will have to rely on young players on the offensive line and transfers at wide receiver. Purdue likely will feature an exciting offense and an improved defense, but winning more than three or four games will be a challenge for Brohm and his coaching staff.



DAVID BLOUGH

"You have to give the school credit for making a great hire in Jeff (Brohm) because that job became as unappealing as any I can think of in the Power 5."
– An opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	10	Gregory Phillips (Sr.)	13	Terrance Landers (So.)
WR	21	Anthony Mahoungou (Sr.)	33	Jackson Anthrop (Fr.)
LT	78	Grant Hermanns (Fr.)	73	Ethan Smart (Jr.)
LG	68	Peyton Truitt (So.)	60	Eric Swingler (Jr.)
C	53	**Kirk Barron (Jr.)**	55	Michael Mendez (So).
RG	50	Bearooz Yacoobi (Jr.)	72	Jalen Jackson (Fr.)
RT	79	**Matt McCann (So.)**	75	Jalen Neal (Sr.)
TE	88	**Cole Herdman (Jr.)**	89	Brycen Hopkins (So.)
QB	11	**David Blough (Jr.)**	2	Elijah Sindelar (So.)
RB	8	**Markell Jones (Jr.)**	1	D.J. Knox (Jr.)
RB	36	Richie Worship (So.)	25	Tario Fuller (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	45	Austin Larkin (Sr.)	98	Kai Higgins (So.)
DT	13	**Gelen Robinson (Sr.)**	9	Lorenzo Neal (So.)
DT	7	**Eddy Wilson (Jr.)**	50	Keiwan Jones (Jr.)
DE	11	Antoine Miles (Sr.)	48	Rob Simmons (Jr.)
LB	36	Danny Ezechukwu (Sr.)	6	T.J. McCollum (Sr.)
LB	21	**Markus Bailey (So.)**	16	Garrett Hudson (Sr.)
LB	4	**Ja'Whaun Bentley (Sr.)**	22	Sawyer Dawson (So.)
CB	2	**Da'Wan Hunte (Sr.)**	23	Josh Hayes (So.)
CB	24	Tim Cason (Jr.)	33	Simeon Smiley (Fr.)
S	26	C.J. Parker (Sr.)	5	T.J. Jallow (Jr.)
S	27	**Navon Mosley (So.)**		Joshua Okonye (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	85	J.D. Dellinger (So.)	KR	37	B. Lankford-Johnson (So.)
P	31	Joe Schopper (Jr.)	PR	9	Malik Kimbrough (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: David Blough, 517-295-3,352-21, 25 TDs
Rushing: Markell Jones, 153 att., 616 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Cole Herdman, 35 rec., 344 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Markus Bailey, 97
Sacks: Gelen Robinson, 5.0
Interceptions: Markus Bailey, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jeff Brohm
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 30-10 (3 years)
Co-Offensive Coordinators: Brian Brohm, Tony Levine
Co-Defensive Coordinators: Nick Holt, Anthony Poindexter
West Lafayette, IN • Ross-Ade Stadium (57,236)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

WISCONSIN BADGERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **12** • BIG TEN WEST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **10-3, 7-2 BIG TEN**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Utah State
Sept.	9	Florida Atlantic
Sept.	16	at BYU
Sept.	30	Northwestern
Oct.	7	at Nebraska
Oct.	14	Purdue
Oct.	21	Maryland
Oct.	28	at Illinois
Nov.	4	at Indiana
Nov.	11	Iowa
Nov.	18	Michigan
Nov.	25	at Minnesota

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-3, 7-2 BIG TEN

Sept.	3	vs. LSU #	W	16-14
Sept.	10	Akron	W	54-10
Sept.	17	Georgia State	W	23-17
Sept.	24	at Michigan State	W	30-6
Oct.	1	at Michigan	L	7-14
Oct.	15	Ohio State	(ot) L	23-30
Oct.	22	at Iowa	W	17-9
Oct.	29	Nebraska	(ot) W	23-17
Nov.	5	at Northwestern	W	21-7
Nov.	12	Illinois	W	48-3
Nov.	19	at Purdue	W	49-20
Nov.	26	Minnesota	W	31-17
Dec.	3	vs. Penn State %	L	31-38
Jan.	2	vs. Western Michigan $	W	24-16

#Green Bay %Indianapolis $Cotton Bowl Classic

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kayden Lyles, OL, Madison, WI
2. Danny Davis, WR, Springfield, OH
3. Jake Ferguson, TE, Madison, WI
4. Jonathan Taylor, RB, Salem, NJ
5. Tyler Beach, OT, Grafton, WI
6. Andrew Van Ginkel, DL, Rock Valley, IA*
7. Jack Coan, QB, West Sayville, NY
8. Izayah Green-May, LB, Bolingbrook, IL
9. Logan Bruss, OG, Appleton, WI
10. Aaron Vopal, DE, De Pere, WI

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	BIG TEN	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.4 ppg	5	67
Rushing	203.1 ypg	3	39
Passing	179.1 ypg	9	104
Total	382.1 ypg	8	89
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	15.6 ppg	3	4
Rushing	98.8 ypg	1	3
Passing	202.6 ypg	6	30
Total	301.4 ypg	3	7
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**BIG TEN**	**NATIONAL**
+12	+0.86	2	9

STAT CORNER

5.5

Wisconsin averaged only 5.5 yards per play to rank 84th in the nation. It was the lowest ranking of any team that won at least 10 games.

OFFENSE The Badgers ranked 39th nationally in rushing offense last season. While that production wasn't up to their typical standards, it marked a jump of 56 spots from the previous season.

Whether Wisconsin can continue to trend upward in that category will depend largely on how a new-look backfield performs. Gone are Corey Clement, who rushed for 1,375 yards and 15 touchdowns as a senior, and jack-of-all-trades Dare Ogunbowale. Taking their place are Bradrick Shaw and Chris James. Shaw averaged 5.2 yards per carry in limited action last season. James, a transfer from Pittsburgh, gives Wisconsin a speedy option in the backfield.

There's plenty of experience returning on the offensive line, although Wisconsin has to replace left tackle Ryan Ramczyk. Taking Ramczyk's place will be David Edwards, who began his career as a tight end and started seven games last season at right tackle. Michael Deiter, who has started 27 consecutive games, provides options because he can play either center or guard.

Wisconsin needs more consistent play at quarterback. Alex Hornibrook started nine games as a redshirt freshman and had some big moments, but he had almost as many interceptions (seven) as touchdown passes (nine) and needs to improve his completion percentage (58.6). The good news for Hornibrook is that his top two targets from last season — wide receiver Jazz Peavy and tight end Troy Fumagalli — are back.

DEFENSE Wisconsin will be under its third defensive coordinator in as many seasons. Jim Leonhard, who played for the Badgers, was promoted from within to run the unit after Justin Wilcox was named head coach at California.

Leonhard's biggest challenge will be replacing outside linebackers T.J. Watt and Vince Biegel. Watt, who had 15.5 tackles for a loss and 11.5 sacks as a junior, left early for the NFL Draft. The rest of the front seven returns intact. The Badgers have loads of experience at the front of their 3-4 defense, and inside linebacker is an area of strength. Jack Cichy, who played inside linebacker last season but has the ability to play on the outside as well, may help fill the playmaking void left by Watt and Biegel.

The secondary was the Badgers' strength last season under Leonhard's watch. Cornerback Derrick Tindal and strong safety D'Cota Dixon are back, but Wisconsin has to replace two players who had fantastic final seasons with the Badgers. Nick Nelson, a transfer from Hawaii, will step in for four-year starter Sojourn Shelton at the other cornerback spot. The situation at free safety isn't as clear. Natrell Jamerson, who began his career at wide receiver before moving to cornerback, is the leading candidate to replace Leo Musso.

SPECIALISTS Rafael Gaglianone was off to a good start in 2016, connecting on seven of his eight field goal attempts, but a back injury ended his season prematurely. Gaglianone has been a huge weapon for the Badgers during his two-plus seasons, going 44-for-57 overall with 17 conversions from 40 yards and beyond. Punter Anthony Lotti was highly decorated when he arrived at Wisconsin last season and should only improve.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Badgers have won 21 games over Paul Chryst's first two seasons despite inconsistency on offense. The defense, on the other hand, has been terrific, and Chryst doesn't expect that to change under Leonhard's leadership. Still, it would take some of the pressure off that group if the Badgers returned to the days where the offensive line wore down opponents. One positive development for Wisconsin: Its schedule appears much more manageable than in 2016, when the opening two months included games against LSU, Michigan, Ohio State and Iowa.



ALEX HORNIBROOK

"Bradrick Shaw could have a breakout year running with that line, to the point where some SEC coaches will wonder how he got out of the territory."
– an opposing Big Ten assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	11	**Jazz Peavy (Sr.)**	17	George Rushing (Sr.)
WR	87	Quintez Cephus (So.)	84	A.J. Taylor (So.)
LT	79	**David Edwards (So.)**	71	Cole Van Lanen (Fr.)
LG	67	**Jon Dietzen (So.)**	75	Micah Kapoi (Jr.)
C	63	**Michael Deiter (Jr.)**	61	Tyler Biadasz (Fr.)
RG	66	**Beau Benzschawel (Jr.)**	68	David Moorman (So.)
RT	62	Patrick Kasl (Fr.)	**52**	**Jacob Maxwell (Jr.)**
TE	81	**Troy Fumagalli (Sr.)**	49	Kyle Penniston (So.)
QB	12	**Alex Hornibrook (So.)**	19	Karé Lyles (Fr.)
RB	7	Bradrick Shaw (So.)	5	Chris James (Jr.)
FB	20	**Austin Ramesh (Sr.)**	45	Alec Ingold (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	94	**Conor Sheehy (Sr.)**	97	Isaiahh Loudermilk (Fr.)
NT	99	Olive Sagapolu (Jr.)	96	Billy Hirschfeld (Jr.)
DE	34	**Chikwe Obasih (Sr.)**	**57**	**Alec James (Sr.)**
OLB	5	Garret Dooley (Sr.)	32	Leon Jacobs (Sr.)
ILB	48	**Jack Cichy (Sr.)**	54	Chris Orr (Jr.)
ILB	53	**T.J. Edwards (Jr.)**	**43**	**Ryan Connelly (Jr.)**
OLB	56	Zack Baun (So.)	17	Andrew Van Ginkel (Jr.)
CB	25	**Derrick Tindal (Sr.)**	29	D. Carriere-Williams (Fr.)
CB	11	Nick Nelson (Jr.)	31	Lubern Figaro (Sr.)
SS	14	**D'Cota Dixon (Sr.)**	22	Patrick Johnson (So.)
FS	12	Natrell Jamerson (Sr.)	36	Joe Ferguson (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	27	Rafael Gaglianone (Sr.)	KR	84	A.J. Taylor (So.)
P	15	Anthony Lotti (So.)	PR	11	Jazz Peavy (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Alex Hornibrook, 181-106-2,262-7, 9 TDs
Rushing: Bradrick Shaw, 88 att., 457 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Troy Fumagalli, 47 rec., 580 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: T.J. Edwards, 89
Sacks: Garret Dooley, 3.5; Alec James, 3.5
Interceptions: D'Cota Dixon, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Paul Chryst
Record at School: 21-6 (2 years)
Career Record: 40-25 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Joe Rudolph
Defensive Coordinator: Jim Leonhard
Madison, WI • Camp Randall Stadium (80,321)

Tom Lynn

CONFERENCE USA PREVIEW



JARRED CRAFT

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	EAST	WEST
1	WKU HILLTOPPERS 9-4, 6-2	LOUISIANA TECH BULLDOGS 9-4, 6-2
2	MIDDLE TENNESSEE BLUE RAIDERS 7-5, 6-2	SOUTHERN MISS GOLDEN EAGLES 7-5, 5-3
3	OLD DOMINION MONARCHS 7-5, 5-3	UTSA ROADRUNNERS 7-5, 5-3
4	FAU OWLS 6-6, 4-4	NORTH TEXAS MEAN GREEN 5-7, 3-5
5	MARSHALL THUNDERING HERD 5-7, 4-4	RICE OWLS 3-9, 3-5
6	FIU PANTHERS 5-7, 4-4	UTEP MINERS 3-9, 3-5
7	CHARLOTTE 49ERS 3-9, 1-7	UAB BLAZERS 3-9, 1-7

Conference USA Championship: Louisiana Tech over WKU

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Boca Raton Bowl: WKU 51, Memphis 31
Armed Forces Bowl: Louisiana Tech 48, Navy 45
New Mexico Bowl: New Mexico 23, UTSA 20
Hawaii Bowl: Hawaii 52, Middle Tennessee 35
New Orleans Bowl: Southern Miss 28, UL-Lafayette 21
Bahamas Bowl: Old Dominion 24, Eastern Michigan 20
Heart of Dallas Bowl: Army 38, North Texas 31

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

New Orleans Bowl: Louisiana Tech vs. Troy
St. Petersburg Bowl: WKU vs. Temple
Boca Raton Bowl: Middle Tennessee vs. UCF
Bahamas Bowl: Southern Miss vs. Ohio
Heart of Dallas Bowl: UTSA vs. TCU

AP

2016 C-USA STANDINGS

EAST	C-USA	OVERALL
WKU	7-1	11-3
OLD DOMINION	7-1	10-3
MIDDLE TENNESSEE	5-3	8-5
FIU	4-4	4-8
CHARLOTTE	3-5	4-8
FAU	2-6	3-9
MARSHALL	2-6	3-9

WEST	C-USA	OVERALL
LOUISIANA TECH	6-2	9-5
UTSA	5-3	6-7
SOUTHERN MISS	4-4	7-6
NORTH TEXAS	3-5	5-8
UTEP	2-6	4-8
RICE	2-6	3-9

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. FAU
2. Southern Miss
3. UTSA
4. FIU
5. WKU
6. Marshall
7. Middle Tennessee
8. Louisiana Tech
9. Charlotte
10. UAB
11. North Texas
12. Rice
13. Old Dominion
14. UTEP

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
CHARLOTTE	8	12	13	13	12	12	12
FAU	7	1	6	5	11	10	9
FIU	5	6	7	12	9	3	8
LOUISIANA TECH	3	4	3	2	1	4	11
MARSHALL	4	11	10	11	7	5	3
MIDDLE TENNESSEE	1	9	1	7	10	2	7
NORTH TEXAS	10	7	9	10	8	7	2
OLD DOMINION	12	3	5	4	2	14	4
RICE	13	10	11	6	6	8	13
SOUTHERN MISS	11	2	2	9	5	11	5
UAB	14	13	14	14	14	13	14
UTEP	9	14	12	3	13	9	10
UTSA	6	8	4	8	3	1	6
WKU	2	5	8	1	4	6	1



RICHIE JAMES

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Brent Stockstill	6-0	223	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
RB	Devin Singletary	5-9	200	So.	FAU
RB	Ito Smith	5-9	195	Sr.	Southern Miss
AP	Richie James	5-9	178	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
WR	Allenzae Staggers	6-1	190	Sr.	Southern Miss
WR	Kalib Woods	6-3	193	Sr.	FAU
TE	Ryan Yurachek	6-3	239	Sr.	Marshall
C	Nick Clarke	6-4	285	Jr.	Old Dominion
OL	Chandler Brewer	6-6	313	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
OL	O'Shea Dugas	6-5	329	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
OL	Will Hernandez	6-3	330	Sr.	UTEP
OL	Brandon Ray	6-2	300	Sr.	WKU

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Walter Brady	6-3	268	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
DL	Marcus Davenport	6-7	245	Sr.	UTSA
DL	Jaylon Ferguson	6-5	255	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
DL	Oshane Ximines	6-3	239	Jr.	Old Dominion
LB	Emmanuel Ellerbee	6-1	235	Sr.	Rice
LB	Alvin Jones	5-11	225	Sr.	UTEP
LB	Josiah Tauaefa	6-1	230	So.	UTSA
CB	Brandon Addison	5-10	175	Sr.	Old Dominion
CB	Joe Brown	5-10	195	Sr.	WKU
S	Kishawn McClain	5-11	194	Sr.	North Texas
S	Jalen Young	5-11	185	Jr.	FAU

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Jonathan Barnes	5-9	172	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
P	Jack Fox	6-1	215	Jr.	Rice
KR	Kylen Towner	5-8	175	Sr.	WKU
PR	Nacarius Fant	5-9	185	Sr.	WKU

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Mike White	6-4	225	Sr.	WKU
RB	Ray Lawry	5-10	204	Sr.	Old Dominion
RB	Jeffery Wilson	6-0	193	Sr.	North Texas
AP	Jarred Craft	6-0	213	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
WR	Lucky Jackson	6-1	185	So.	WKU
WR	Thomas Owens	6-1	198	Sr.	FIU
TE	Jonathan Duhart	6-3	221	Sr.	Old Dominion
C	Trey Martin	6-2	300	Sr.	Rice
OL	Calvin Anderson	6-5	285	Jr.	Rice
OL	Reggie Bain	6-4	300	Jr.	FAU
OL	Nate Davis	6-3	299	Jr.	Charlotte
OL	Dennis Edwards	6-1	305	Jr.	WKU

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Ryan Bee	6-7	267	Jr.	Marshall
DL	Chris Johnson	6-1	285	Sr.	WKU
DL	Bunmi Rotimi	6-4	277	Sr.	Old Dominion
DL	Xavier Thigpen	6-5	240	Sr.	Southern Miss
LB	Azeez Al-Shaair	6-2	220	Jr.	FAU
LB	Chris Melton	6-1	207	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
LB	Anthony Wint	6-0	224	Sr.	FIU
CB	Rodney Allen	5-11	190	Sr.	Marshall
CB	Nate Brooks	6-0	176	Jr.	North Texas
S	Devin Cockrell	6-0	200	Sr.	UTEP
S	Nate Gaines	6-2	200	Sr.	UTSA

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Canon Rooker	5-11	189	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
P	Jake Collins	6-1	210	Jr.	WKU
KR	Kerrith Whyte Jr.	5-10	200	So.	FAU
PR	Terry Juniel	5-10	180	Jr.	UTEP

CHARLOTTE 49ERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **126** • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 1-7 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Eastern Michigan
Sept.	9	at Kansas State
Sept.	16	North Carolina A&T
Sept.	23	Georgia State
Sept.	30	at FIU
Oct.	7	Marshall
Oct.	14	at Western Kentucky
Oct.	21	UAB
Nov.	4	at Old Dominion
Nov.	11	Middle Tennessee
Nov.	18	at Southern Miss
Nov.	25	Florida Atlantic

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 C-USA

Sept.	1	at Louisville	L	14-70
Sept.	10	Elon	W	47-14
Sept.	17	Eastern Michigan	L	19-37
Sept.	24	at Temple	L	20-48
Oct.	1	Old Dominion	L	17-52
Oct.	9	at Florida Atlantic	W	28-23
Oct.	15	FIU	L	26-27
Oct.	22	at Marshall	W	27-24
Nov.	5	at Southern Miss	W	38-27
Nov.	12	Rice	L	21-22
Nov.	19	Middle Tennessee	L	31-38
Nov.	26	at UTSA	L	14-33

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kameron Duncan, RB, Ocala, FL
2. Chrishawn Wilson, DL, Florence, SC
3. D'Mitri Emmanuel, OL, Waxhaw, NC
4. Cameron Bent, WR, Bluffton, SC
5. Victor Tucker, WR, Opa Locka, FL
6. Michael Adams, DT, Summerville, GA
7. Jonathan Francois, LB, Hialeah, FL
8. Mic Roof, QB, Duluth, GA
9. Marquavis Gibbs, DB, West Palm Beach, FL*
10. De'Anthony O'Neill, LB/DE, Tallahassee, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.2 ppg	11	94
Rushing	176.8 ypg	6	60
Passing	192.8 ypg	12	98
Total	369.5 ypg	10	101
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	34.6 ppg	7	102
Rushing	143.4 ypg	2	35
Passing	309.8 ypg	13	124
Total	453.3 ypg	10	105
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+7	+0.58	2	23

STAT CORNER

.500

Charlotte's win over Southern Miss was its first ever over an FBS team that finished above .500. The 49ers are 1-9 vs. such teams.

OFFENSE While Charlotte's season ended on a down note — the 49ers lost their last three games — at least coach Brad Lambert found a quarterback. After stepping into the starting role midway through the year, North Carolina A&T transfer Hasaan Klugh made the job his own, accounting for 15 total touchdowns in the final seven games. Lambert says that after a strong spring, the junior solidified his status as one of the team's most effective leaders. After missing last season with a back injury, junior Brooks Barden will give Klugh an experienced backup.

Klugh will have the benefit a deep group of tested receivers, led by senior T.L. Ford and junior Workpeh Kofa. The 49ers, however, need to establish a deep threat; neither Ford nor Kofa averaged more than 12.2 yards per reception last season.

"We've got some age there, some experience. We're kind of leaning on that group," Lambert says.

But there are pressing questions elsewhere. Sophomore running backs Robert Washington and Benny LeMay — as well as converted linebacker Markevis Davis — will try to fill the void left by former All-Conference USA pick Kalif Phillips. And along the offensive line there is some experience, but scant continuity. Don't be surprised if they work some junior college pickups into the rotation.

With Greg Adkins brought in to handle the offensive line and coordinate the running game, it'll feel like a fresh start for this piece of the offense.

DEFENSE Two-thirds of last season's solid defensive front are gone. While Larry Ogunjobi's and Brandon Banks' absences will be felt, Lambert says he's excited to see what sophomore Randy Suydam, junior Tyler Fain and senior Nick Carroll can do in their place. Charlotte had the luxury of redshirting a handful of defensive linemen last season. This year, they'll have to grow up quickly as they'll be pressed into service early in a unit in need of depth.

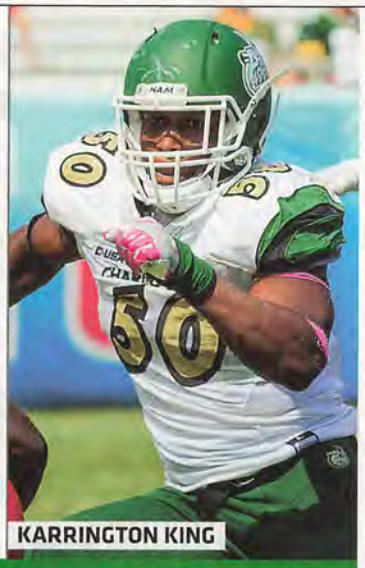
Senior Karrington King will have to pick up the slack from the departure of fellow linebacker Nick Cook, last season's leading tackler. Expect veteran outside linebackers Jeff Gemmell and Tyriq Harris to build on productive 2016 campaigns. While there are questions to be answered at linebacker, Lambert believes that the 49ers have the raw materials to be strong there.

There are also solid options in the secondary as sophomores AJ McDonald and Ben DeLuca return at safety and Robert Cheatem and Marquavis Gibbs are expected to make an impact in their first run at cornerback alongside veterans Anthony Covington and Denzel Irvin. The 49ers gave up 309.8 yards per game through the air last season, so improvement here will be a welcome sight.

SPECIALISTS Senior Arthur Hart is locked in at punter after averaging 39.2 yards per kick last season. But the kicking job is wide open. Both of last season's kickers are gone, leaving redshirt freshman Kyle Corbett, sophomore Jackson Vansickle and others to figure it out.

FINAL ANALYSIS Charlotte's third season in FBS and fifth overall will feel strange since it's the first without the 19 players who made it through from the program's initial recruiting class. So not only is the group trying to fill some major holes on the field, but it's also trying to find its identity off of it.

Last season's four wins doubled the output from the year before. And with three losses coming by a touchdown or less, that improvement could have been steeper. But this season, Charlotte will likely need to keep its expectations in check. While the 49ers have potential, they'll also likely need to draw on plenty of patience.



KARRINGTON KING

"Those guys have a shot at building something good. It takes time to build it, but it's a great area, and I love their stadium."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	17	Mark Quattlebaum (Jr.)	4	Chris Montgomery (Sr.)
WR	5	**T.L. Ford II (Sr.)**	9	Uriah LeMay (Sr.)
WR	6	**Workpeh Kofa (Jr.)**	81	Trent Bostick (Sr.)
LT	51	**Chris Brown (Jr.)**	79	Josh Snapper (So.)
LG	77	Wolfgang Zacherl (Sr.)	69	Luke Prevette (Fr.)
C	60	Darren Drake (Jr.)	68	Jaelin Fisher (Fr.)
RG	64	**Nate Davis (Jr.)**	78	Trevor Stacy (So.)
RT	75	**Eugene German (Sr.)**	71	Cameron Clark (So.)
TE	88	R.J. Tyler (Jr.)	85	Ryan Carriere (Fr.)
QB	7	**Hasaan Klugh (Jr.)**	12	Brooks Barden (Jr.)
RB	32	Benny LeMay (So.)	20	Robert Washington (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	91	**Nick Carroll (Sr.)**	52	Zach Duncan (Jr.)
DT	62	Tyler Fain (Jr.)	99	Jon Hardy (So.)
DE	56	Randy Suydam (So.)	57	Austin Paraison (Fr.)
OLB	34	Jeff Gemmell (So.)	30	Darius Irvin (So.)
ILB	17	Anthony Butler (So.)	44	Cam Darley (Jr.)
ILB	50	**Karrington King (Sr.)**	32	Sean Bernard (Jr.)
OLB	10	**Tyriq Harris (So.)**	46	Alex Highsmith (So.)
CB	15	Marquavis Gibbs (So.)	23	Anthony Covington (Sr.)
CB	36	Robert Cheatem (Fr.)	25	Denzel Irvin (Jr.)
SS	41	**AJ McDonald (So.)**	11	**Ed Rolle (Jr.)**
FS	28	**Ben DeLuca (So.)**	12	Alex Duncan (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

P	39	Kyle Corbett (Fr.)	KR	4	Chris Montgomery (Sr.)
K	40	Arthur Hart (Sr.)	PR	83	Nate Mullen (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Hasaan Klugh, 224-120-1,356-3, 10 TDs
Rushing: Robert Washington, 97 att., 489 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: T.L. Ford II, 36 rec., 430 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Karrington King, 73
Sacks: Karrington King, 2.0; Tyriq Harris, 2.0
Interceptions: Ed Rolle, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Brad Lambert
Record at School: 16-30 (4 years)
Career Record: 16-30 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jeff Mullen
Defensive Coordinator: Matt Wallerstedt
Charlotte, NC • Jerry Richardson Stadium (15,314)

Charlotte 49ers Athletics

FLORIDA ATLANTIC OWLS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **98** • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-4 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Navy
Sept.	9	at Wisconsin
Sept.	16	Bethune-Cookman
Sept.	23	at Buffalo
Sept.	30	Middle Tennessee
Oct.	7	at Old Dominion
Oct.	21	North Texas
Oct.	28	at Western Kentucky
Nov.	3	Marshall
Nov.	11	at Louisiana Tech
Nov.	18	FIU
Nov.	25	at Charlotte

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 C-USA

Sept.	3	Southern Illinois	W	38-30
Sept.	10	at Miami	L	10-38
Sept.	17	at Kansas State	L	7-63
Sept.	24	Ball State	L	27-31
Oct.	1	at FIU	L	31-33
Oct.	9	Charlotte	L	23-28
Oct.	15	at Marshall	L	21-27
Oct.	29	Western Kentucky	L	3-52
Nov.	5	at Rice	W	42-25
Nov.	12	UTEP	W	35-31
Nov.	19	Old Dominion	L	24-42
Nov.	26	at Middle Tennessee	L	56-77

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. De'Andre Johnson, QB, Jacksonville, FL*
2. Ahman Ross, S, Jacksonville, FL
3. Quran Hafiz, DB, Jacksonville, FL
4. DeAndre McNeal, WR, Mesquite, TX*
5. Joey Palmer, OL, Thornville, OH*
6. Jordan Merrell, WR, Fort Lauderdale, FL
7. Chase Lasater, ATH, Orange Park, FL
8. Ernest Bagner, DE, Paramount, CA*
9. Tim Bonner, DE, Demopolis, AL*
10. Zyon Gilbert, DB, Montgomery, AL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.4 ppg	7	80
Rushing	188.2 ypg	3	51
Passing	210.1 ypg	10	88
Total	398.3 ypg	6	72
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	39.8 ppg	13	123
Rushing	245.4 ypg	13	119
Passing	268.4 ypg	9	110
Total	513.8 ypg	13	124
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

100/63/66

Freshmen and sophomores accounted for 100% of FAU's passing yards, 63% of its rushing yards, and 66% of its tackles in 2016.

OFFENSE In December, following three consecutive 3–9 seasons, FAU thrust itself into college football relevance by hiring former Alabama offensive coordinator — and national curiosity — Lane Kiffin to be the program's fifth head coach. One day after introducing Kiffin, FAU signed East Mississippi Community College quarterback De'Andre Johnson, formerly at Florida State. The Seminoles dismissed Johnson, Florida's 2014 "Mr. Football," in 2015 after video surfaced of him allegedly punching a girl at a Tallahassee bar. Kiffin then hired offensive coordinator Kendal Briles, who departed Baylor under the haze of the Bears' sexual abuse scandal.

Despite being one of football's top offensive minds, Kiffin won't be calling the plays for FAU this season. He'll leave those duties to Briles, who will run the jet-fueled Baylor offense with some of Kiffin's scheme mixed in.

The Briles, Kiffin and Johnson combo should make the Owls offense more dynamic than the one that ranked No. 72 in total offense last season.

The trio will rely on a strong ground attack already in place before they arrived. In senior Buddy Howell and sophomore Devin Singletary, the Owls return a duo that combined to rush for 1,849 yards behind an offensive line decimated by injuries. Nearly all of Singletary's 1,021 yards came in the final half of the season.

The athleticism of the wide receiving unit surprised Kiffin. Kalib Woods returns after nabbing 68 catches for 934 yards and could be primed for a breakout season.

DEFENSE Kiffin hired his brother, Chris Kiffin, away from Ole Miss to run the defense, then completed the family affair by bringing his father Monte Kiffin, of Tampa 2 fame, to Boca Raton as a consultant.

The Kiffins intended to play a base 4-3 defense, but a shortage of linebackers during the spring forced them to employ a nickel base. With all the spread offenses FAU faces in Conference USA, having the extra defensive back on the field may prove the wise choice, regardless of health.

Whichever defensive scheme the Kiffins settle on, the Owls will have to tackle significantly better than in 2016, when they surrendered 513.8 yards and 39.8 points per game.

FAU lost the program's career sack leader in Trey Hendrickson to the NFL. Junior linebacker Azeez Al-Shaair, a former Freshman All-American, sat out spring drills following shoulder surgery but should emerge as the defensive leader. Al-Shaair recorded a combined 207 tackles over his first two seasons.

Junior safety Jalen Young brings back his 100 tackles. If cornerback Raekwon Williams improves his ball skills, he'll be one of the best cover corners in C-USA.

SPECIALISTS FAU boasts a potent kickoff return duo in Singletary and Kerrith Whyte. Whyte's 1,002 kickoff return yards last season were fourth most nationally. Entering the program's 17th season, FAU has never returned a kickoff for a touchdown. Ryan Rickel assumes punting duties now that Dalton Schomp, who led the NCAA in 2015, has graduated. Senior Greg Joseph is 42-of-61 on field goal attempts in his career.

FINAL ANALYSIS FAU has athletes on offense, and with Lane Kiffin and Briles guiding that side of the ball, the Owls are almost certain to score more points. Under the guidance of Chris and Monte Kiffin, the defense can't help but improve, right? After the Owls lost four games by less than a touchdown last season, it doesn't take much imagination to envision FAU as a bowl-eligible team, as long as the new coaches, transfers and returning players mesh quickly.



DEVIN SINGLETARY

"I don't have any doubt they'll get some talented guys. The question is: Can they manage the kind of guys they get and not turn it into a circus?"
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	4	**Kalib Woods (Sr.)**		DeAndre McNeal (Jr.)
WR	85	John Mitchell (So.)	7	**Pico Harrison (So.)**
SLOT	15	Kamrin Solomon (Sr.)	1	Henry Bussey (Sr.)
LT	58	Reggie Bain (Jr.)	55	Matt Murphy (Jr.)
LG	73	Brandon Walton (So.)	65	Tarrick Thomas (So.)
C	64	**Antonyo Woods (Sr.)**	78	Richard Williams (So.)
RG	77	**Roman Fernandez (Sr.)**	53	**Jakobi Smith (Sr.)**
RT		Joey Palmer (Jr.)	57	**Matt Weiner (Jr.)**
TE	40	Harrison Bryant (So.)	30	John Raine (So.)
QB	14	De'Andre Johnson (So.)	16	**Jason Driskel (Jr.)**
RB	5	Devin Singletary (So.)	9	**Buddy Howell (Sr.)**

DEFENSE (6)

DE	98	**Haiden Nagel (Sr.)**	94	Hunter Snyder (Jr.)
DT	56	**Steven Leggett (Jr.)**	48	Kevin McCray (So.)
DT	11	Ray Ellis (Jr.)	42	Will Davis (So.)
DE	8	Nick Internicola (Sr.)		Ernest Bagner (Jr.)
OLB	2	**Azeez Al-Shaair (Jr.)**	7	Rashad Smith (So.)
MLB		Carson Lydon (Jr.)	49	Khantrell Burden (Jr.)
NB	10	Herb Miller (Jr.)	9	Quran Hafiz (Fr.)
CB	23	**Raekwon Williams (Sr.)**	26	Chris Tooley (So.)
CB	3	**Shelton Lewis (Jr.)**	29	Korel Smith (Fr.)
S	18	**Jalen Young (Jr.)**	19	Jake Stoshak (Jr.)
S	14	Andrew Soroh (Jr.)		Ahman Ross (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	17	Greg Joseph (Sr.)	KR	5	Devin Singletary (So.)
P	99	Ryan Rickel (Sr.)	PR	1	Henry Bussey (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jason Driskel, 327-200-2,415-11, 9 TDs
Rushing: Devin Singletary, 152 att., 1,021 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Kalib Woods, 68 rec., 934 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: Azeez Al-Shaair, 112
Sacks: Three players tied with 2.0
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Lane Kiffin
Record at School: First season
Career Record: 35-21 (4+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kendal Briles
Defensive Coordinator: Chris Kiffin
Boca Raton, FL • FAU Stadium (29,419)

AP

FIU PANTHERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **113** • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 4-4 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at UCF
Sept.	9	Alcorn State
Sept.	16	at Indiana
Sept.	23	at Rice
Sept.	30	Charlotte
Oct.	7	at Middle Tennessee
Oct.	14	Tulane
Oct.	28	at Marshall
Nov.	4	UTSA
Nov.	11	Old Dominion
Nov.	18	at Florida Atlantic
Nov.	25	Western Kentucky

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 4-4 C-USA

Sept.	1	Indiana	L	13-34
Sept.	9	Maryland	L	14-41
Sept.	17	at Massachusetts	L	13-21
Sept.	24	UCF	L	14-53
Oct.	1	Florida Atlantic	W	33-31
Oct.	8	at UTEP	W	35-21
Oct.	15	at Charlotte	W	27-26
Oct.	22	Louisiana Tech	L	24-44
Oct.	29	Middle Tennessee	L	35-42
Nov.	5	at Western Kentucky	L	21-49
Nov.	19	Marshall	W	31-14
Nov.	26	at Old Dominion	L	28-42

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Dorian Hall, ATH, Hollywood, FL
2. Cody Bowes, OL, Miami, FL
3. Noah Curtis, DL, Delray Beach, FL
4. Jamal Gates, LB, Palm Beach Gardens, FL
5. Willa Pierre, OL, Miami, FL
6. Brandon James, LB, Miami, FL
7. Romelo Brooks, ATH, Miami, FL
8. Rashad Colson, DL, Miami, FL
9. Richard Dames, DB, Miami, FL
10. D'Vonte Price, RB, Punta Gorda, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.0 ppg	13	106
Rushing	148.6 ypg	11	97
Passing	226.7 ypg	7	69
Total	375.3 ypg	9	98
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	34.8 ppg	8	104
Rushing	198.8 ypg	8	86
Passing	235.8 ypg	6	76
Total	434.6 ypg	7	86
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-9	-0.75	12	117

STAT CORNER

7.5

FIU allowed 7.5 yards per play on first down, 126th in FBS. The Panthers were in an immediate hole and never caught up.

OFFENSE New offensive coordinator Rich Skrosky walks into a favorable situation in his first year leading FIU's offense for Butch Davis. Quarterback Alex McGough and running back Alex Gardner are both fourth-year starters who bring a wealth of game experience into the 2017 season. McGough threw for 1,891 yards last season, but his touchdown-to-interception ratio (13-to-11) must improve. If he struggles, don't expect Davis to wait to make a change.

Gardner is a dual threat for the Panthers, having rushed for 930 yards and six touchdowns last season while also catching 30 passes out of the backfield. Anthony Jones is also a backfield weapon. He rushed for 562 yards as a sophomore, including 128 in a win at UTEP and 121 in a win vs. Marshall. The top pass-catching target in 2017 will be Thomas Owens, who had 47 catches for 652 yards and seven touchdowns in 2016.

The biggest question is along the offensive line. The Panthers return a wealth of experience, but the unit has struggled in recent years. Kai Absheer moves from guard to left tackle while experienced players such as right tackle Daquane Wilkie and center Neil Mars return. If play doesn't improve along the line, Davis could inject some young talent into the mix after a successful recruiting season. Look for freshmen Cody Bowes and Willa Pierre to be among those young guys in the mix early.

DEFENSE Davis tabbed Brent Guy, a former head coach at Utah State, as his defensive coordinator. Guy's task is to get the Panthers' defense — which allowed 34.8 points per game in 2016 — to play with a mean streak.

Much like the offensive side of the football, there is plenty of experience and few holes to fill in terms of starting production. The youth brought in from the strong recruiting class will provide instant depth while pushing the veterans.

The top returning players on defense include end Fermin Silva, cornerback Emmanuel Lubin and linebackers Treyvon Williams and Anthony Wint. Williams and Wint both recorded more than 100 tackles in 2016. Safeties Niko Gonzalez and Xavier Hines have developed chemistry in the secondary.

If there is an area of concern for the Panthers, it is right in the middle of the field, where the team lost its top three defensive tackles and standout linebacker Davison Colimon. There is plenty of talent at the linebacker position to make up for Colimon's absence, but the interior defensive line will have to develop quickly for FIU's defense to be successful. The Panthers recorded only 17 sacks in 2016 to rank 11th in Conference USA.

SPECIALISTS The return game for FIU is solid with Gardner back as a kick returner and Owens back as one of Conference USA's top punt returners. That's where the good news ends. Placekicker Austin Taylor graduated, and punter Stone Wilson has lacked consistency. He averaged only 37.6 yards on his 61 punts and downed only 12 inside the 20-yard line. That loss in the field position battle was crucial in several close losses last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS On paper, FIU has a solid outlook heading into the 2017 season. Davis is a proven winner, and the Panthers have one of the nation's most experienced rosters taking the field. The new staff also landed an outstanding recruiting class in his first two months, which could provide instant depth.

The two areas crucial to immediate success are improvement along the offensive front and more consistency from the punting game. If FIU can improve in those two areas, the team could be in position to go to its first bowl game since the 2011 season.



ALEX GARDNER

"The new staff has to go in there and get some players, but I don't think you just snap your fingers and kids in South Florida are gonna come."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	81	**Thomas Owens (Sr.)**	14	Darrius Scott (So.)	
WR	5	Julian Williams (Jr.)	15	Austin Maloney (So.)	
WR	16	Tony Gaiter IV (So.)	21	**Stantley Thomas (So.)**	
LT	79	**Kai Absheer (Jr.)**	65	Daquane Wilkie (Jr.)	
LG	60	Dallas Connell (So.)	66	Jordan Budwig (Sr.)	
C	76	Neal Mars (Jr.)	55	Shane McGough (Fr.)	
RG	69	Chris Miller (Jr.)		Cody Bowes (Fr.)	
RT	65	**Daquane Wilkie (Jr.)**		Willa Pierre (Fr.)	
TE	88	A.J. Sattinger (Sr.)	80	Zach Armour (Fr.)	
QB	12	**Alex McGough (Sr.)**	3	Maurice Alexander (So.)	
RB	1	**Alex Gardner (Sr.)**	2	Anthony Jones (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (9)

DE	7	**Fermin Silva (Jr.)**	71	R.J. Harris (So.)
DT	99	**Jermaine Sheriff (Jr.)**	95	Andrew Tarver (Fr.)
DT	46	Milord Juste (Jr.)		Rashad Colson (Fr.)
DE	97	**Newton Salisbury (Sr.)**		Noah Curtis (Fr.)
LB	52	**Treyvon Williams (Sr.)**		Romelo Brooks (Fr.)
LB	53	**Anthony Wint (Sr.)**	57	Jordan Guest (Sr.)
LB	47	Sage Lewis (So.)	44	Brandon James (Fr.)
CB	20	**Emmanuel Lubin (Jr.)**	23	Khairi Reaser (Jr.)
CB	13	**Isaiah Brown (So.)**	31	Tyree Johnson (Jr.)
S	33	**Niko Gonzalez (Sr.)**	25	Isaiah Hill (So.)
S	27	**Xavier Hines (Sr.)**	26	Shermarke Spence (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	30	Jose Borregales (Fr.)	KR	1	Alex Gardner (Sr.)
P	6	Stone Wilson (Jr.)	PR	81	Thomas Owens (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Alex McGough, 286-167-1,891-11, 13 TDs
Rushing: Alex Gardner, 181 att., 930 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Thomas Owens, 47 rec., 652 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Treyvon Williams, 109
Sacks: Fermin Silva, 5.0
Interceptions: Isaiah Brown, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Butch Davis
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 79-43 (10 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Rich Skrosky
Defensive Coordinator: Brent Guy
Miami, FL • Riccardo Silva Stadium (20,000)

FIU Athletics

MARSHALL THUNDERING HERD

NATIONAL FORECAST: **107** • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 4-4 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Miami (Ohio)
Sept. 9	at NC State
Sept. 16	Kent State
Sept. 30	at Cincinnati
Oct. 7	at Charlotte
Oct. 14	Old Dominion
Oct. 20	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 28	FIU
Nov. 3	at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 11	Western Kentucky
Nov. 18	at UTSA
Nov. 25	Southern Miss

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 C-USA

Sept. 10	Morgan State	W	62-0
Sept. 17	Akron	L	38-65
Sept. 24	Louisville	L	28-59
Oct. 1	at Pittsburgh	L	27-43
Oct. 8	at North Texas	L	21-38
Oct. 15	Florida Atlantic	W	27-21
Oct. 22	Charlotte	L	24-27
Oct. 29	at Southern Miss	L	14-24
Nov. 5	at Old Dominion	L	14-38
Nov. 12	Middle Tennessee	W	42-17
Nov. 19	at FIU	L	14-31
Nov. 26	Western Kentucky	L	6-60

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Darius Hodge, LB, Wake Forest, NC
2. Monterio Hunt, WR, Walnut, MS
3. Devin Miller, TE, Metuchen, NJ
4. Sheldon Evans, RB, Roswell, GA
5. Donyae Moody, LB, Baltimore, MD*
6. DeCavilon Reese, RB, Cleveland, OH
7. Isaiah Green, QB, Fairburn, GA
8. Kereon Merrell, DB, Vienna, GA*
9. Janiero Crankfield, WR, Clearwater, FL
10. Artis Johnson, LB/S, Lott, TX*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.4 ppg	7	80
Rushing	108.2 ypg	13	122
Passing	241.8 ypg	5	58
Total	350.0 ypg	12	114
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	35.3 ppg	10	107
Rushing	202.3 ypg	9	89
Passing	253.7 ypg	8	99
Total	456.0 ypg	11	107
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.33	3	36

STAT CORNER

-10.9

Marshall's collapse was swift and unexpected: The Herd underachieved their spread by 10.9 points per game, worst in FBS.

OFFENSE Marshall underachieved on offense in all aspects in 2016. The numbers reflected the lack of cohesion, as the Herd finished 114th nationally in total offense and 122nd in rushing offense. The opposition was able to fire at will at quarterback Chase Litton, who was pressured constantly.

For Marshall to improve in 2017, the onus is on the offensive line, which suffered myriad injuries that contributed to a lack of depth and the struggles as the season progressed. Marshall redshirted six freshman offensive linemen last season so they could get stronger in the weight room, and those players need to grow up quickly to help the Herd with depth.

After staff shuffling on the offensive side in the offseason, Litton begins his third year as a starter for the Herd, but he has to win back the trust of teammates after being suspended while injured during the final week of the regular season. There will be new weapons for Litton this season — most notably Miami transfer Tyre Brady, who sat out last season. Five of the top six receivers from last year are gone with only tight end Ryan Yurachek returning from among that group.

The rushing attack was sub-par last season — the Herd finished last in Conference USA in both rushing yards per game (108.2) and yards per rush (3.3) — but will be bolstered by junior college signee Trey Rodriguez, who was formerly at FAU, and Tyler King, who sat out last season. Leading rusher Keion Davis also returns to the backfield, as does Anthony Anderson.

DEFENSE As many difficulties as Marshall's offense had, the defense was just as porous throughout the 2016 season, finishing 107th in both yards allowed and points allowed. Much of that difficulty came from an inability to make plays in the middle of the field, whether it was the defensive front or the second level, where the linebackers struggled.

The good news for Marshall is that help is on the way. Marshall's coaching staff moved talented defensive end Ryan Bee to the interior to add a playmaker to the mix while shifting Davon Durant and Damien Dozier to defensive end from their previous spots at linebacker. The moves were made possible because Marshall coach Doc Holliday signed a pair of talented linebackers from junior college — Donyae Moody (inside) and Artis Johnson (outside). Add in Jaquan Yulee, who was one of the Class of 2016's top players nationally before sitting out a year as a non-qualifier, to the mix, and the Herd have plenty of talent at the second level.

The secondary will be the strength of the defense with cornerbacks Rodney Allen and Chris Jackson returning, along with safeties C.J. Reavis and Kendall Gant.

SPECIALISTS Marshall's placekicking was a nightmare last season as the team made just 4-of-10 attempts. However, the addition of freshman kicker Cole Phillips is expected to shore up the position. The Herd's punting and ability to win the field position battle — something that had been a staple under Holliday — also took a hit in 2016, so punter Kaare Vedvik needs to establish consistency in that department.

FINAL ANALYSIS Marshall is looking to erase the taste of a year in which everything that could have gone wrong did go wrong. Whether it was on-field execution or off-field chemistry, the Herd had countless issues during the 3–9 campaign. However, there is plenty of new talent coming in, providing reason for optimism. What remains to be seen is how the chemistry holds once adversity hits. If the Herd can solve that issue, a rebound season is in order.



CHASE LITTON

"There was something going on there, some issues that I wouldn't know behind closed doors. They've been too good in this league to look that bad."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	8	Tyre Brady (Jr.)	6	Darian Owens (Fr.)	
WR	6	Darian Owens (Fr.)	83	Marcel Williams (Jr.)	
WR	3	Willie Johnson (Fr.)	2	Hyleck Foster (Sr.)	
LT	67	Sandley Jean-Felix (Sr.)	71	Tarik Adams (Fr.)	
LG	58	**Jordan Dowrey (Jr.)**	62	Cain Madden (Fr.)	
C	61	**Levi Brown (So.)**	55	Alex Mollette (Fr.)	
RG	76	Nathaniel Devers (Jr.)	78	Alex Salguero (Fr.)	
RT	74	AJ Addison (Sr.)	77	Alex Locklear (So.)	
TE	85	**Ryan Yurachek (Sr.)**	15	Armani Levias (Jr.)	
QB	14	**Chase Litton (Jr.)**	12	Garet Morrell (So.)	
RB		Trey Rodriguez (Jr.)	24	Keion Davis (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	44	Blake Keller (Sr.)	17	Ty Tyler (So.)	
DT	91	**Ryan Bee (Jr.)**	51	Malik Thompson (Jr.)	
DT	94	Channing Hames (So.)	54	**Nyquan Harris (Jr.)**	
DE	36	Davon Durant (Sr.)	90	Damien Dozier (So.)	
LB	4	Juwon Young (Jr.)	31	**Omari Cobb (So.)**	
LB	10	Donyae Moody (Jr.)	37	**Chase Hancock (Jr.)**	
LB	32	Artis Johnson (Jr.)		Jaquan Yulee (Fr.)	
CB	11	**Rodney Allen (Sr.)**	20	Jaylon McClain-Sapp (So.)	
CB	3	**Chris Jackson (So.)**	27	Kereon Merrell (Jr.)	
S	14	**Kendall Gant (Sr.)**	45	Brandon Drayton (Fr.)	
S	1	C.J. Reavis (Sr.)		Sir Patrick Scott (Fr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Cole Phillips (Fr.)	KR	3	Willie Johnson (Fr.)
P	16	Kaare Vedvik (Sr.)	PR	2	Hyleck Foster (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chase Litton, 371-231-2,612-9, 24 TDs
Rushing: Keion Davis, 113 att., 469 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Ryan Yurachek, 28 rec., 298 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Kendall Gant, 77
Sacks: Ryan Bee, 4.5
Interceptions: Rodney Allen, 2; Chris Jackson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Doc Holliday
Record at School: 53-37 (7 years)
Career Record: 53-37 (7 years)
Co-Offensive Coordinators: Todd Goebbel, Bill Legg
Defensive Coordinator: Chuck Heater
Huntington, WV • Joan C. Edwards Stadium (38,227)

Marshall Athletics

MTSU BLUE RAIDERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **75** • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 6-2 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Vanderbilt
Sept.	9	at Syracuse
Sept.	16	at Minnesota
Sept.	23	Bowling Green
Sept.	30	at Florida Atlantic
Oct.	7	FIU
Oct.	14	at UAB
Oct.	20	Marshall
Nov.	4	UTEP
Nov.	11	at Charlotte
Nov.	17	at Western Kentucky
Nov.	25	Old Dominion

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 C-USA

Sept.	3	Alabama A&M	W	55-0
Sept.	10	at Vanderbilt	L	24-47
Sept.	17	at Bowling Green	W	41-21
Sept.	24	Louisiana Tech	W	38-34
Oct.	1	at North Texas	W	30-13
Oct.	15	Western Kentucky (ot)	L	43-44
Oct.	22	at Missouri	W	51-45
Oct.	29	at FIU	W	42-35
Nov.	5	UTSA	L	25-45
Nov.	12	at Marshall	L	27-42
Nov.	19	at Charlotte	W	38-31
Nov.	26	Florida Atlantic	W	77-56
Dec.	24	vs. Hawaii #	L	35-52

#Hawaii Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Zack Dobson, WR, Knoxville, TN
2. Cain McWilliams, LB, Lewisburg, TN
3. DQ Thomas, LB, Oxford, MS
4. Reed Blankenship, DB, Athens, AL
5. Raheme Fuller, DB, Fort Lauderdale, FL
6. Maurice Gordon, RB, Denton, TX*
7. Zeke Cobb, WR, Dalton, GA
8. Jordan Ferguson, DT, Atlanta, GA
9. Cody Smith, S, Stuart, FL
10. DJ Delfendahl, OL, Mt. Juliet, TN

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	39.7 ppg	3	12
Rushing	191.8 ypg	2	48
Passing	325.8 ypg	3	8
Total	517.7 ypg	2	8
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	35.8 ppg	11	109
Rushing	198.7 ypg	7	85
Passing	250.8 ypg	7	95
Total	449.5 ypg	9	96
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-2	-0.15	8	78

STAT CORNER

545

Middle Tennessee averaged 545 yards of offense in two games against SEC opponents last season – 495 in a loss at Vanderbilt and 595 in a win at Missouri.

OFFENSE Quarterback Brent Stockstill and wide receiver Richie James return as one of the nation's most explosive passing duos. Both only juniors, they should break Middle Tennessee's career records for passing yards and receiving yards this season. Stockstill (7,279 yards, 61 TDs in career), the son of head coach Rick Stockstsill, should be fully recovered from offseason shoulder surgery. He is a Conference USA Player of the Year candidate. James is the NCAA active career leader in receptions (213) and receiving yards (2,971). Ty Lee and Patrick Smith are talented complementary receivers for an offense that averaged nearly 40 points per game and set more than a dozen school records last season.

One big hole is at running back, where offensive coordinator Tony Franklin must replace I'Tavius Mathers' school-record 1,561 rushing yards. Shane Tucker, talented but injury prone, returns to his natural position at running back after a brief stint at wide receiver. Junior college transfer Maurice Gordon may be the best long-term option. But the ground game will go only as far as a rebuilt offensive line will allow. Only two starters return, and some linemen could be moved around in preseason camp.

DEFENSE New defensive coordinator Scott Shafer, the former Syracuse head coach, must retool a unit that gave up 35.8 points per game last season. He will have some key components to work with, as the Blue Raiders return eight of their top nine tacklers from last season.

All three starters and backups are back to bolster one of C-USA's top linebacking corps. Leading tackler Chris Melton (102 tackles), steady producer Darius Harris (8.0 tackles for a loss) and playmaker D.J. Sanders (two TD interception returns) lead the group. The secondary touts experience with four starters back, but it was torched at times last season in a bend-but-don't-break approach.

Shafer will try to turn the Blue Raiders into a more aggressive, attacking defense. But first, he needs to rebuild a line with all new starters. The squad's best hope for a difference-making pass rusher is Missouri transfer Walter Brady, the nation's sack leader (7.0) among freshmen in 2015.

SPECIALISTS Canon Rooker made 16-of-19 field goals last season as an All-Conference USA first-teamer, and he scored 112 points, the most ever by a Middle Tennessee kicker. Steady punter Matt Bonadies also returns. The team's leading kick returners and punt returners are back, but they did not record a single return of more than 40 yards last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Rick Stockstill's track record says that Middle Tennessee will be explosive on offense, especially as long as his son is behind center, and the team will earn a bowl bid. The Blue Raiders have been bowl-eligible in seven of the past eight seasons. Reaching beyond that will be a tougher task. Middle Tennessee has never earned an outright league championship in the school's FBS era.

The Blue Raiders knocked off Missouri last season, and there are similarly winnable non-conference games early on against Vanderbilt, Syracuse, Minnesota and Bowling Green. A good record in that first month could yield a special season, but a 2–2 split would be a reasonable feat.

There's little mystery to this team's deciding factors. They reside on the respective lines. If the Blue Raiders can fill the gaps on the offensive line, Brent Stockstill and company again will attack the record book. And if the inexperienced defensive line can grow up fast, it will support an otherwise strong defense. If neither happens, Middle Tennessee could fall into inconsistency. But either way, the potent offensive weapons should ensure a bowl appearance.



BRENT STOCKSTILL

"Scott Shafer was a huge hire for the defense. He's a quality coach, very aggressive. I would expect them to be much better on that side of the ball."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	37	**Patrick Smith (Sr.)**	25	Desmond Anderson (Jr.)
WR	3	**Richie James (Jr.)**	82	Reginald Henderson (Fr.)
WR	24	**Ty Lee (So.)**	27	Ruben Garnett (So.)
WR	9	Isiah Upton (So.)	81	CJ Windham (So.)
LT	71	Angelo Owens (Jr.)	70	Conner Trent (Sr.)
LG	77	Amir Luckett (So.)	54	Ty Watkins (Jr.)
C	74	Robert Behanan (Jr.)	68	Luke Harris (Fr.)
RG	73	**Chandler Brewer (Jr.)**	72	Josh Fannin (So.)
RT	55	**Carlos Johnson (Jr.)**	75	Lucas Hamilton (Sr.)
QB	12	**Brent Stockstill (Jr.)**	19	John Urzua (So.)
RB	1	Shane Tucker (Sr.)	20	Maurice Gordon (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	90	Walter Brady (Jr.)	11	Peter Bailey (Sr.)
DT		Raheem Collins (Jr.)	96	Rakavian Poydras (Fr.)
DT	93	Malik Manciel (So.)	92	Ty Nix (Fr.)
DE	94	Tyshun Render (So.)	43	Jahmal Jones (Sr.)
MLB	30	**Darius Harris (Jr.)**	33	**Myles Harges (Sr.)**
OLB	31	**DJ Sanders (Sr.)**	16	Khalil Brooks (So.)
OLB	32	**Chris Melton (Jr.)**	38	Malik Hawkins (Sr.)
CB	6	**Mike Minter (Sr.)**	17	Kylan Stribling (Fr.)
CB	29	**Darryl Randolph (Jr.)**	2	Charvarius Ward (Sr.)
SS	22	**Alex Dale (Sr.)**	23	Wesley Bush (Jr.)
FS	7	**Jovante Moffatt (Jr.)**	46	Vernon Walker (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	Canon Rooker (Sr.)	KR	25	Desmond Anderson (Jr.)
P	99	Matt Bonadies (Jr.)	PR	3	Richie James (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brent Stockstill, 414-262-3,233-7, 31 TDs
Rushing: Richie James, 38 att., 339 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Richie James, 105 rec., 1,625 yds., 12 TDs
Tackles: Chris Melton, 102
Sacks: Chris Melton, 2.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Rick Stockstill
Record at School: 72-66 (11 years)
Career Record: 72-66 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tony Franklin
Defensive Coordinator: Scott Shafer
Murfreesboro, TN • Floyd Stadium (30,788)

MTSU Athletics

OLD DOMINION MONARCHS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **90** • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Albany
Sept.	9	at Massachusetts
Sept.	16	North Carolina
Sept.	23	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	7	Florida Atlantic
Oct.	14	at Marshall
Oct.	20	Western Kentucky
Oct.	28	at North Texas
Nov.	4	Charlotte
Nov.	11	at FIU
Nov.	18	Rice
Nov.	25	at Middle Tennessee

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 7-1 C-USA

Sept.	4	Hampton	W	54-21
Sept.	10	at Appalachian State	L	7-31
Sept.	17	at NC State	L	22-49
Sept.	24	UTSA	W	33-19
Oct.	1	at Charlotte	W	52-17
Oct.	7	Massachusetts	W	36-16
Oct.	22	at Western Kentucky	L	24-59
Oct.	29	at UTEP	W	31-21
Nov.	5	Marshall	W	38-14
Nov.	12	Southern Miss	W	51-35
Nov.	19	at Florida Atlantic	W	42-24
Nov.	26	FIU	W	42-28
Dec.	23	vs. Eastern Michigan #	W	24-20

#Bahamas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Casey Perkins, RB, Smyrna, TN
2. Tracy White, CB, Hinesville, GA
3. Keisean Wilson, LB, Waldorf, MD
4. Amari Colbert, WR, Warner Robins, GA
5. Jack Miller, OL, Richmond, VA
6. Cameron Muller, OL, Columbia, SC
7. Marcus Haynes, DE, Bowie, MD
8. James Valle, DE, Burtonsville, MD
9. Steven Williams Jr., QB, Washington, DC
10. Estefano Feliciano, LB, Tampa, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.1 ppg	4	31
Rushing	196.8 ypg	1	45
Passing	234.0 ypg	6	64
Total	430.8 ypg	5	50
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.2 ppg	2	57
Rushing	157.2 ypg	5	50
Passing	226.5 ypg	4	63
Total	383.6 ypg	3	49
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+13	+1.00	1	4

STAT CORNER

+14

ODU committed more than one turnover in a game just twice, and the Monarchs' turnover margin flipped from minus-1 to plus-13 – a 14-turnover swing

OFFENSE Historically, quarterback play hasn't been an area of concern for Old Dominion. And that includes seasons when conventional wisdom would suggest it should be. In 2016, the Monarchs handed the reins to David Washington, a converted receiver. Washington responded by throwing for 31 touchdowns versus five picks. With Washington gone, Monarchs coach Bobby Wilder has several candidates for the quarterback gig. That list includes last season's backup Blake LaRussa and redshirt freshman Drayton Arnold. Wilder believes in his staff's ability to develop a quarterback, so he's sure the competition will yield a clear choice.

It helps that the running back tandem of senior Ray Lawry, the school's all-time leading rusher, and junior Jeremy Cox returns after combining for 2,239 total yards last season.

Of the 10 players who caught three or more passes last season, nine return, including prime targets in receivers Jonathan Duhart and Travis Fulgham. But someone from the large cast of receiving threats will have to offset the loss of senior Zach Pascal, who racked up 946 yards last season.

By the end of last season, just one senior was starting on the Monarchs' line, meaning this season's squad should have plenty of continuity. Junior center Nick Clarke will anchor a unit that will be able to cycle in as many as nine linemen whom Wilder trusts.

DEFENSE Wilder credits the defensive line as the unit that set the tone for the team's giant leap forward last season. The Monarchs' opponents averaged 8.6 fewer points and 54.2 fewer yards per game than in 2015 thanks in large part to the rock-solid group up front. And much to Wilder's delight, the bulk of that group returns. Defensive end Oshane Ximines racked up a team-best 7.5 sacks, while fellow edge rusher Bunmi Rotimi had seven of his own. Two more dangerous ends, Daniel Appouh and Tim Ward, are also back. Wilder says there's a rotation of six experienced players who will play on the inside of the defensive line.

But behind them, there are concerns. The linebackers will be young and thin. Junior Marvin Branch is the most experienced option. Sophomores Terez Dickerson and Derek Wilder, the coach's son, will be in the mix, too. But with little in the way of sure things, Wilder says he might be forced to scrap the Monarchs' preferred three-linebacker look in favor of a nickel scheme should no clear choices emerge.

It helps that the secondary is deep and experienced with a pair of cornerbacks in senior Brandon Addison and sophomore Jamez Brickhouse having already distinguished themselves as big-game players. Junior Sean Carter and seniors Rob Thompson and Justice Davila will provide some continuity at safety.

SPECIALISTS Last season, freshman kicker Brad Davis stepped in for injured starter Chris Kirtley and hit 10 of his 12 field goal tries and 45 of his 46 extra points. With both Davis and Kirtley back, the Monarchs should have some healthy competition. Bailey Cate will handle the punting duties again, while Darrell Brown and Kesean Strong will have the inside track on the return jobs.

FINAL ANALYSIS While falling a game shy of a league title, Old Dominion's 10-win 2016 campaign was undeniably a breakthrough. And with 15 starters back, the Monarchs have every reason to expect that success to continue. "I'm a firm believer that, when you have success, if you can carry the momentum and then demand more from yourself and the players, you can continue to have success," Wilder says. "That's what we've been doing."



RAY LAWRY

"It's a great place to recruit because of the talent in that area. That's probably the best job in our league because of the location and their fan base."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	15	Isaiah Harper (Jr.)	3	Marques Little (Sr.)	
WR	7	**Travis Fulgham (Jr.)**	2	Hassan Patterson (So.)	
WR	21	**Jonathan Duhart (Sr.)**	8	Noah Ellison (Fr.)	
LT	71	Isaac Weaver (So.)	62	Hunter Sosebee (So.)	
LG	74	Tony Barnett (So.)	68	A.J. Davison (Jr.)	
C	63	**Nick Clarke (Jr.)**	77	Manny Matiarena (Sr.)	
RG	56	**Devin Hannan (So.)**	61	Andrew Lawson (Fr.)	
RT	73	**Chad Hendricks (Jr.)**	78	Darius Garcia (Sr.)	
TE	1	**Melvin Vaughn (Sr.)**	85	Nijee Cox (So.)	
QB	11	Blake LaRussa (So.)	9	Drayton Arnold (Fr.)	
RB	33	**Ray Lawry (Sr.)**	35	**Jeremy Cox (Jr.)**	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	44	**Bunmi Rotimi (Sr.)**	4	Daniel Appouh (Jr.)	
DT	54	Pat Toal (Jr.)	55	Brandon Tyson (Jr.)	
DT	90	**Miles Fox (Jr.)**	53	Ryan Londree (Jr.)	
DE	7	**Oshane Ximines (Jr.)**	2	Tim Ward (Jr.)	
LB	39	Jordan Young (Fr.)	47	Anthony Resek (So.)	
LB	42	Derek Wilder (So.)	43	Zach Lackman (Fr.)	
LB	37	Marvin Branch (Jr.)	34	Lawrence Garner (Fr.)	
CB	1	**Brandon Addison (Sr.)**	27	Jelani Carter (So.)	
CB	5	Jamez Brickhouse (So.)	19	Akim Bundu-Fitz (So.)	
FS	20	**Rob Thompson (Sr.)**	28	**Justice Davila (Sr.)**	
SS	31	**Sean Carter (Jr.)**	25	Denzel Williams (So.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	41	Brad Davis (So.)	KR	4	Kesean Strong (Jr.)
P	96	Bailey Cate (So.)	PR	80	Darrell Brown (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Blake LaRussa, 24-14-140-1, 0 TDs
Rushing: Ray Lawry, 200 att., 1,255 yds., 11 TDs
Receiving: Jonathan Duhart, 48 rec., 735 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Sean Carter, 60
Sacks: Oshane Ximines, 7.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bobby Wilder
Record at School: 67-30 (8 years)
Career Record: 67-30 (8 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brian Scott
Defensive Coordinator: Rich Nagy
Norfolk, VA • Foreman Field (20,118)

Old Dominion Athletics

WKU HILLTOPPERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **73** • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-4, 6-2 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Eastern Kentucky
Sept.	9	at Illinois
Sept.	16	Louisiana Tech
Sept.	23	Ball State
Oct.	7	at UTEP
Oct.	14	Charlotte
Oct.	20	at Old Dominion
Oct.	28	Florida Atlantic
Nov.	4	at Vanderbilt
Nov.	11	at Marshall
Nov.	17	Middle Tennessee
Nov.	25	at FIU

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-3, 7-1 C-USA

Sept.	1	Rice	W	46-14
Sept.	10	at Alabama	L	10-38
Sept.	17	at Miami (Ohio)	W	31-24
Sept.	24	Vanderbilt (ot)	L	30-31
Oct.	1	Houston Baptist	W	50-3
Oct.	6	at Louisiana Tech	L	52-55
Oct.	15	at Middle Tenn. (ot)	W	44-43
Oct.	22	Old Dominion	W	59-24
Oct.	29	at Florida Atlantic	W	52-3
Nov.	5	FIU	W	49-21
Nov.	12	North Texas	W	45-7
Nov.	26	at Marshall	W	60-6
Dec.	3	Louisiana Tech #	W	58-44
Dec.	20	vs. Memphis %	W	51-31

#C-USA Championship %Boca Raton Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Mik'Quan Deane, TE, Tulsa, OK*
2. Calder Marria Jr., DL, Jonesboro, GA
3. Juwuan Jones, LB, Sugar Hill, GA
4. Kyle Bailey, LB, Bremen, GA
5. Josh Samuel, RB, Greenville, SC
6. Latheron Rodgers-Anderson, DB, Columbia, SC
7. Preston Mixon, OL, Montgomery, AL
8. Tariq Young, WR, Lakeland, FL
9. Caleb Etheridge, OL, Forsyth, GA
10. Roger Cray, DB, Lake City, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	45.5 ppg	1	1
Rushing	186.4 ypg	4	52
Passing	336.8 ypg	2	5
Total	523.1 ypg	1	5
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.6 ppg	1	41
Rushing	97.2 ypg	1	2
Passing	279.4 ypg	11	119
Total	376.6 ypg	2	41
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.14	5	52

STAT CORNER

8.9

WKU's offense averaged 8.9 yards per play on first down, No. 1 in FBS. The No. 2 offense (USF) was nearly a yard back at 8.1.

OFFENSE Mike White took the reins last season from longtime starting quarterback Brandon Doughty and kept the Western Kentucky offense humming. White's 2016 stats (67.3 percent, 311.6 ypg, 37 TDs, seven INTs) were especially impressive considering he didn't play much in the second halves of several blowouts. The senior QB is an ideal bridge between the offenses of former coach Jeff Brohm and new coach Mike Sanford.

Junior D'Andre Ferby's 2016 season came to an end after he suffered a shoulder injury on his first carry of the year. He's slimmed down from 240 pounds at the beginning of last season to 225 but still brings power up the middle. Sophomore speedster Quinton Baker will complement Ferby's between-the-tackles running. Baker posted 542 yards and four TDs last year as a true freshman.

Graduated wideouts Nicholas Norris and Taywan Taylor rank at the top of every major receiving records list for the Hilltoppers. Senior Nacarius Fant (407 yards) and sophomore Lucky Jackson (395) are the top two returning wide receivers. Watch for rangy redshirt freshman Xavier Lane to become a big-play threat.

Four-year starting left tackle and highly touted NFL prospect Forrest Lamp is gone. The interior of the line is still stout, with senior left guard Brandon Ray and junior right guard Dennis Edwards returning. Senior Jimmie Sims will likely take Lamp's old spot at left tackle.

DEFENSE Seniors Derik Overstreet (34 tackles, 8.5 TFLs, 4.0 sacks) and Chris Johnson (43 tackles, 12.5 TFLs, 4.0 sacks) are two veterans who helped WKU hold opponents to just 3.0 yards per carry last season. That figure ranked fourth nationally.

The Toppers lost a defensive leader when senior linebacker T.J. McCollum followed WKU's previous coaching staff to Purdue as a graduate transfer. Expect junior linebacker Joel Iyiegbuniwe to be one of the Hilltoppers' top tacklers in coordinator Clayton White's new 4-2-5 scheme.

The strength of the defense is the secondary, where all five projected starters are seniors. Cornerback Joe Brown broke up a team-best 10 passes last year, while fellow defensive backs Leverick Johnson and De'Andre Simmons defended eight apiece. Safety Marcus Ward gets a fifth year after missing the final 12 games of 2016 due to a knee injury.

SPECIALISTS Junior Skyler Simcox won the competition for placekicking duties last season and made 16-of-22 field goal attempts. The return game was huge for WKU. Fant averaged 15.6 yards per punt return with a pair of TDs, while Kylen Towner averaged a whopping 40.3 yards per kick return with one touchdown.

FINAL ANALYSIS WKU made three straight solid coaching hires in Willie Taggart, Bobby Petrino and Brohm, all of whom are now coaching at Power 5 programs. After Brohm left for Purdue, athletic director Todd Stewart turned to Sanford, who spent the last two years as Notre Dame's offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach. He's just 35 years old, but the coaches he's worked under or played for include Chris Petersen, Jim Harbaugh and David Shaw. The son of longtime college coach Mike Sanford Sr., the younger Sanford has been groomed his whole life for the chance to lead his own program.

The key returnee for Sanford is White, who piloted WKU to an FBS-best 45.5 points per game and 7.7 yards per play last season. Program stalwarts Lamp and Taylor are gone, but there's enough of a foundation that Sanford doesn't have to completely rebuild. The two-time defending Conference USA champion Hilltoppers won't give up their league crown without a fight.



MIKE WHITE

"Their talent is just a little bit better than anybody else. They look more like a Power 5 team. They've done a good job recruiting in Florida."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	1	**Nacarius Fant (Sr.)**	8	Kylen Towner (Sr.)	
WR	11	Lucky Jackson (So.)	7	Jahcour Pearson (Fr.)	
WR	16	Quin Jernighan (So)	9	Xavier Lane (Fr.)	
LT	75	**Jimmie Sims (Sr.)**	68	Parker Howell (So.)	
LG	51	**Brandon Ray (Sr.)**	63	Miles Pate (So.)	
C	55	Tyler Camp (So.)	67	Seth Joest (Fr.)	
RG	64	**Dennis Edwards (Jr.)**	73	Cullen Reynolds (So.)	
RT	69	Matt Nord (Sr.)	78	Nick Allen (Jr.)	
TE		Mik'Quan Deane (Jr).	19	Deon Yelder (Sr)	
QB	14	**Mike White (Sr.)**	4	Drew Eckels (Jr.)	
RB	32	D'Andre Ferby (Jr.)	3	Quinton Baker (So.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	42	**Derik Overstreet (Sr.)**	11	Tanner Reeves (Sr.)	
DT	3	**Chris Johnson (Sr.)**	55	Jalen Madden (Fr.)	
DT	96	Julien Lewis (Jr.)	56	Evan Sayner (Jr.)	
DE	95	Heath Wiggins (So.)	43	Carson Jordan (Jr.)	
LB	4	**Joel Iyiegbuniwe (Jr.)**	44	Ben Holt (So.)	
LB	25	Masai Whyte (Jr.)	54	Daeshawn Bertram (Sr.)	
NB	1	Leverick Johnson (Sr.)	27	Martavius Mims (Jr.)	
CB	7	**Joe Brown (Sr.)**	22	DeAndre Farris (Jr.)	
CB	23	**De'Andre Simmons (Sr.)**	10	AJ Jackson (So.)	
S	8	Marcus Ward (Sr.)	5	Jason Johnson (So.)	
S	14	Juwan Gardner (Sr.)	28	Drell Greene (Jr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	88	Skyler Simcox (Jr.)	KR	8	Kylen Towner (Sr.)
P	49	Jake Collins (Jr.)	PR	1	Nacarius Fant (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Mike White, 416-280-4,363-7, 37 TDs
Rushing: Quinton Baker, 99 att., 542 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Nacarius Fant, 29 rec., 407 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Joel Iyiegbuniwe, 64
Sacks: Chris Johnson, 4.0; Derik Overstreet, 4.0
Interceptions: Tacorian Darden, 2; Leverick Johnson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Sanford
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Junior Adams
Defensive Coordinator: Clayton White
Bowling Green, KY • L.T. Smith Stadium (22,113)

WKU Athletics/Steve Roberts

LOUISIANA TECH BULLDOGS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **71** • C-USA WEST PREDICTIONS: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-4, 6-2 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Northwestern State
Sept.	9	Mississippi State
Sept.	16	at Western Kentucky
Sept.	23	at South Carolina
Sept.	30	South Alabama
Oct.	7	at UAB
Oct.	21	Southern Miss
Oct.	28	at Rice
Nov.	4	North Texas
Nov.	11	Florida Atlantic
Nov.	18	at UTEP
Nov.	25	UTSA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-5, 6-2 C-USA

Sept.	3	at Arkansas	L	20-21
Sept.	10	South Carolina State	W	53-24
Sept.	17	at Texas Tech	L	45-59
Sept.	24	at Middle Tennessee	L	34-38
Oct.	1	UTEP	W	28-7
Oct.	6	Western Kentucky	W	55-52
Oct.	15	vs. Massachusetts #	W	56-28
Oct.	22	at FIU	W	44-24
Oct.	29	Rice	W	61-16
Nov.	5	at North Texas	W	45-24
Nov.	12	UTSA	W	63-35
Nov.	25	at Southern Miss	L	24-39
Dec.	3	at Western Kentucky %	L	44-58
Dec.	23	vs. Navy &	W	48-45

#Foxboro %C-USA Championship &Armed Forces Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jaiden Cole, ATH, Monroe, LA
2. Amik Robertson, DB, Thibodaux, LA
3. JaCorion Andrews, DB, Monroe, LA
4. Elijah Walker, QB, Amite, LA
5. Joshua Mote, OL, Oak Grove, LA
6. Kollin Hurt, DB, Gilmer, TX
7. Michael Sam, DB, New Iberia, LA*
8. Hanner Shipley, OL, Marble Falls, TX*
9. George Scott III, WR, Natchez, MS
10. Cualan Williams, WR, Lewisville, AR

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	44.3 ppg	2	2
Rushing	151.4 ypg	10	94
Passing	363.4 ypg	1	2
Total	514.7 ypg	3	9
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	33.6 ppg	6	97
Rushing	146.2 ypg	3	42
Passing	274.7 ypg	10	116
Total	420.9 ypg	6	71
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.07	7	64

STAT CORNER

27

Louisiana Tech has won 27 games in three years, its most ever at the FBS level. The previous high: 23 from 1997-99.

OFFENSE The Bulldogs have had an impressive three-year run on offense, with national rankings of 14th, 19th and second, respectively, in scoring over that span. Interestingly, Louisiana Tech has broken in a new quarterback in each of those seasons, and that will be the case once again in 2017. Sophomore J'Mar Smith takes over for Ryan Higgins, and if all goes well, Louisiana Tech will not be welcoming a new starting quarterback for 2018. Smith is more of a dual threat than Higgins, so expect the Bulldogs to incorporate more designed runs for the QB this season.

The running game is in great shape with 1,000-yard rusher Jarred Craft and breakaway threat Boston Scott back as seniors. The wide receiver corps bids farewell to the incredibly productive Trent Taylor and Carlos Henderson (3,338 yards, 31 TDs combined). Two transfers are expected to pick up much of the load. Teddy Veal (Tulane) and Adrian Hardy (former Oklahoma signee) enjoyed excellent springs and will be vital in the four-receiver attack. Alfred Smith is a quick option in the slot, and Kam McKnight plays a tight end/wide receiver role and is effective running the ball in the red zone.

The line returns three solid starters, but there was uncertainty at center and left tackle in the spring.

DEFENSE As strong as the offense has been, the defense has struggled during Louisiana Tech's three-year run of nine-win seasons. The Bulldogs were 97th in the nation in scoring defense last season and have been in the top 60 just once in coach Skip Holtz's four years.

Six starters are gone from last season, but many of the newcomers earned a lot of playing time in reserve roles. The best player on defense is end Jaylon Ferguson, a first-team All-C-USA selection who set the school's single-season sack record last season with 14.5. Senior Deldrick Canty, an honorable-mention All-C-USA player as a junior, mans the other end and gives Tech some punch up front.

Russell Farris is the lone returning linebacker, but Brandon Durman and DaMarion King are experienced, and junior college transfer Randy Hogan put himself in the mix immediately in the spring.

In the secondary, Secdrick Cooper has a chance to be an all-league safety, but there are questions at the corners. Sophomore L'Jarius Sneed won one job halfway through last season, but the other spot is up for grabs. True freshman Amik Robertson should be given a legitimate shot to start in the fall.

SPECIALISTS Two-time Lou Groza Award semifinalist Jonathan Barnes is back. His 32-yard field goal as time expired gave the Bulldogs a 48-45 win over Navy in the Armed Forces Bowl last season. Barnes will handle all placekicking duties. At punter, Australian import Davan Dyer comes in new to the sport. Trained as a rugby player, Dyer has been playing football for six months and took a crash course during spring ball.

FINAL ANALYSIS Louisiana Tech has a 19–5 record in conference play over the last three seasons and has won the Conference USA West division twice during that time. Returning to the C-USA title game will certainly be a challenge with the losses on the offensive side of the ball, but scoring points has not been an issue for the Bulldogs in recent seasons — even with the turnover at quarterback. What has been a problem: fielding a capable defense. There is, however, room for optimism on that side of the ball with a strong line led by Ferguson. Outside of a road game vs. Western Kentucky, the conference schedule lines up favorably. If the defense can improve, another division title is within reach.



JARRED CRAFT

"They're a very sound spread offense. They get the ball to their playmakers, but they did lose a lot of skill. They will look different this year."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	83	Teddy Veal (Jr.)	84	Javonte Woodard (So.)
WR	89	Adrian Hardy (Fr.)	16	Marcus Gaines (Sr.)
WR	80	Kam McKnight (Jr.)	86	Rhashid Bonnette (So.)
WR	85	**Alfred Smith (So.)**	85	Marlon Watts (Sr.)
LT	77	Gewhite Stallworth (Sr.)	66	Shane Carpenter (Jr.)
LG	74	**O'Shea Dugas (Jr.)**	57	DeVante Lovett (So.)
C		Drew Kirkpatrick (Jr.)	65	Kody Russey (So.)
RG	61	**Ethan Reed (So.)**	69	Drew Melancon (So.)
RT	58	**Joshua Outlaw (Sr.)**	70	Michael Rodriguez (Jr.)
QB	8	J'Mar Smith (So.)	2	Jack Abraham (Fr.)
RB	22	**Jarred Craft (Sr.)**	6	Boston Scott (Sr.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	45	**Jaylon Ferguson (Jr.)**	93	Immanuel Turner (Jr.)
DT	94	**Jordan Bradford (Jr.)**	96	Ka'Derrion Mason (So.)
DT	91	Cedric Johnson (Jr.)	99	Keonatye Garner (Jr.)
DE	50	**Deldrick Canty (Sr.)**	95	Matthew Ydarraga (Jr.)
LB	51	**Russell Farris (Sr.)**	35	Collin Scott (So.)
LB	54	Brandon Durman (Jr.)		Randy Hogan (Jr.)
LB	8	DaMarion King (Sr.)	33	Dae'Von Washington (Jr.)
CB	14	Ronald Lewis (Jr.)	40	Roland Dunn (Sr.)
CB	24	L'Jarius Sneed (So.)	37	Ephraim Kitchen (So.)
S	38	Darryl Lewis (Jr.)	49	Elliot Blankenship (Sr.)
S	35	**Secdrick Cooper (Sr.)**	32	Trey Spencer (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	10	Jonathan Barnes (Sr.)	KR	6	Boston Scott (Sr.)
P		Davan Dyer (Fr.)	PR	89	Adrian Hardy (Fr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: J'mar Smith, 43-30-412-1, 2 TDs
Rushing: Jarred Craft, 191 att., 1,074 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Jarred Craft, 42 rec., 340 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Russell Farris, 75
Sacks: Jaylon Ferguson, 14.5
Interceptions: Ronald Lewis, 1; L'Jarius Sneed, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Skip Holtz
Record at School: 31-22 (4 years)
Career Record: 119-93 (17 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Todd Fitch
Defensive Coordinator: Blake Baker
Ruston, LA • Joe Aillet Stadium (28,019)

Fred Kfoury III/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

NORTH TEXAS MEAN GREEN

NATIONAL FORECAST: **108** • C-USA WEST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 3-5 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Lamar
Sept. 9	at SMU
Sept. 16	at Iowa
Sept. 23	UAB
Sept. 30	at Southern Miss
Oct. 14	UTSA
Oct. 21	at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 28	Old Dominion
Nov. 4	at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 11	UTEP
Nov. 18	Army
Nov. 25	at Rice

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-8, 3-5 C-USA

Sept. 3	SMU		L	21-34
Sept. 10	Bethune-Cookman		W	41-20
Sept. 17	at Florida		L	0-32
Sept. 24	at Rice	(ot)	W	42-35
Oct. 1	Middle Tennessee		L	13-30
Oct. 8	Marshall		W	38-21
Oct. 22	at Army		W	35-18
Oct. 29	at UTSA		L	17-31
Nov. 5	Louisiana Tech		L	24-45
Nov. 12	at Western Kentucky		L	7-45
Nov. 19	Southern Miss		W	29-23
Nov. 26	at UTEP		L	24-52
Dec. 27	vs. Army #	(ot)	L	31-38

#Heart Of Dallas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jalen Guyton, WR, Allen, TX*
2. Tre Siggers, RB, Duncanville, TX
3. Jaelon Darden, WR, Houston, TX
4. Greg White, WR, Riverdale, GA
5. Cameron Johnson, CB, Houston, TX
6. Tyreke Davis, S, Denton, TX
7. Dakoda Newman, OL, Benbrook, TX
8. Cade Pearson, QB, Texarkana, TX
9. Dion Novil, DL, Abilene, TX
10. Tony Krasniqi, DL, Sachse, TX

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.8 ppg	12	99
Rushing	133.5 ypg	12	109
Passing	208.3 ypg	11	91
Total	341.8 ypg	13	117
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	32.6 ppg	5	96
Rushing	239.5 ypg	12	117
Passing	200.2 ypg	2	27
Total	439.8 ypg	8	89
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	6	58

STAT CORNER

+2.5

UNT averaged 4.6 points per trip inside the 40 and allowed 4.5. This plus-0.1 margin was 2.5 points per trip higher than last year.

OFFENSE North Texas made significant strides in coach Seth Littrell's debut season, improving from 15.2 points per game in 2015 to 24.8 in '16. But the Mean Green's transition from a run-first offense to Littrell's spread passing attack still has some hurdles ahead.

Quarterback Mason Fine showed some promise as a freshman, passing for 1,572 yards, six TDs and five interceptions in 10 games. But he must break in a mostly rebuilt receiving corps to get the air attack off the ground. Turner Smiley (33 receptions, 389 yards) is the only top-four target returning from last season, so inexperienced wide receivers must step into larger roles. Expect Kelvin Smith to catch more passes at H-back, and North Texas hopes lauded junior college transfer Jalen Guyton can become a standout quickly.

North Texas wants to throw the ball, but its best offensive weapon is senior running back Jeffery Wilson, who has rushed for 1,990 yards in his three-year career despite not playing a complete season yet because of injuries. Wilson's health and the play of the line will be major factors in the offense's evolution. Last season, only five teams in FBS allowed more sacks (43) than the Mean Green. They hope the hiring of new offensive line coach Chuck Langston changes that.

DEFENSE There was similar progress on defense, as the Mean Green improved from 41.3 points allowed per game in 2015 to 32.6 last season, but that's still far from where North Texas wants to be. Troy Reffett, previously co-defensive coordinator, takes over full-time play-calling duties in Year 2 of the 3-3-5 scheme.

It's a safe bet that the secondary will be strong, but coaches believe the line will make the largest jump from last season despite the graduation of numerous defensive ends. An offseason reshuffle could help fill the void, with athletic interior linemen and physical linebackers moving to end. Roderick Young, Andy Flusche and T.J. Tauaalo are good building blocks on the line, and Kansas State transfer Bryce English should make an early impact. Linebackers E.J. Ejiya, Joshua Wheeler and Brandon Garner combined for 17 tackles for a loss last season, and that number should rise in Reffett's more aggressive style.

If the front six can improve, it will only aid an experienced secondary, which ranked second in Conference USA in both passing defense and interceptions (14) in 2016. Safety Kishawn McClain, an All-C-USA selection, is perhaps the team's best player after posting a team-high 91 tackles and three interceptions last season. At cornerback, Nate Brooks led the team with four interceptions, and Eric Jenkins had a pair of pick-sixes.

SPECIALISTS Trevor Moore is a solid kicker, making 9-of-13 field goals last season. But in the past two years, he has made only 2-of-10 from 40 yards or more, so his range is limited. Austin McGehee will be the new punter. He previously played at Purdue and punted at Fullerton (Calif.) College last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Littrell pulled off quite a turnaround, going from 1–11 in 2015 to 5–8 and an appearance in the Heart of Dallas bowl in his first season. He was rewarded with a new five-year contract in the offseason, but there is more incremental work ahead.

If Wilson avoids injury and carries the ground game, it should allow the passing attack to develop. If Reffett's re-tooling of the front six on defense yields more pressure to support a talented secondary, the unit will take the next step. Neither of those outcomes is guaranteed, but 2016 progress suggests more to come under Littrell. If North Texas can win a couple of non-conference games, another bowl bid should be within reach.



KISHAWN McCLAIN

"They're a spread offense out of that Larry Fedora tree, and you saw how much better those guys were playing in that system right away."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	9	Jalen Guyton (So.)	83	Tyler Wilson (So.)	
WR	32	Michael Lawrence (So.)	82	Deion Hair-Griffin (Fr.)	
WR	8	Rico Bussey (So.)	**1**	**Turner Smiley (Sr.)**	
LT	**77**	**Elex Woodworth (So.)**	78	Jalen Thomas (Sr.)	
LG	58	Wylie Reinhardt (Sr.)	62	Jerod Fritsch (Jr.)	
C	54	Creighton Barr (Jr.)	69	Jevin Pahinui (Jr.)	
RG	**53**	**T.J. Henson (Sr.)**	68	Chett Munden (So.)	
RT	**71**	**Jordan Murray (Jr.)**	74	Chandler Anthony (Fr.)	
TE	87	Kelvin Smith (So.)	15	Caleb Chumley (So.)	
QB	**6**	**Mason Fine (So.)**	19	Quinn Shanbour (Jr.)	
RB	**26**	**Jeffery Wilson (Sr.)**	21	Nick Smith (Fr.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	99	Andy Flusche (Sr.)	50	LaDarius Hamilton (So.)	
NT	15	T.J. Tauaalo (Jr.)	34	Bryce English (So.)	
DE	**49**	**Roderick Young (Jr.)**	90	Tillman Johnson (Sr.)	
LB	10	Calvin Minor (Sr.)	18	Joshua Wheeler (Sr.)	
LB	22	E.J. Ejiya (Jr.)	43	Zack Bishop (Jr.)	
LB	37	Brandon Garner (Jr.)	52	Colton McDonald (Jr.)	
CB	**9**	**Nate Brooks (Jr.)**	13	Kway Hill (So.)	
CB	2	Eric Jenkins (Sr.)	39	Jameel Moore (So.)	
NB	**27**	**Ashton Preston (Jr.)**	36	Dee Baulkman (Sr.)	
SS	4	Khairi Muhammad (So.)	48	George Powell (So.)	
FS	**23**	**Kishawn McClain (Sr.)**	24	Taylor Robinson (So.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	30	Trevor Moore (Sr.)	KR	83	Tyler Wilson (So.)
P		Austin McGehee (Jr.)	PR	9	Jalen Guyton (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Mason Fine, 261-155-1,572-5, 6 TDs
Rushing: Jeffery Wilson, 169 att., 936 yds., 14 TDs
Receiving: Turner Smiley, 33 rec., 389 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Kishawn McClain, 91
Sacks: Joshua Wheeler, 5.5
Interceptions: Nate Brooks, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Seth Littrell
Record at School: 5-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 5-8 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Graham Harrell
Defensive Coordinator: Troy Reffett
Denton, TX • Apogee Stadium (30,850)

North Texas Athletics/Rick Yeatts

RICE OWLS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **118** • C-USA WEST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 3-5 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26	vs. Stanford #	
Sept. 9	at UTEP	
Sept. 16	at Houston	
Sept. 23	FIU	
Sept. 30	at Pittsburgh	
Oct. 7	Army	
Oct. 21	at UTSA	
Oct. 28	Louisiana Tech	
Nov. 4	at UAB	
Nov. 11	Southern Miss	
Nov. 18	at Old Dominion	
Nov. 25	North Texas	

#Sydney, Australia

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 C-USA

Sept. 1	at Western Kentucky		L	14-46
Sept. 10	at Army		L	14-31
Sept. 16	Baylor		L	10-38
Sept. 24	North Texas	(ot)	L	35-42
Oct. 1	at Southern Miss		L	28-44
Oct. 15	UTSA		L	13-14
Oct. 22	Prairie View		W	65-44
Oct. 29	at Louisiana Tech		L	16-61
Nov. 5	Florida Atlantic		L	25-42
Nov. 12	at Charlotte		W	22-21
Nov. 19	UTEP		W	44-24
Nov. 26	at Stanford		L	17-41

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Miklo Smalls, QB, Plano, TX
2. George Nyakwol, DB, Houston, TX
3. Kenneth Orji, DE, Missouri City, TX
4. Corbin Smith, OL, Port Neches, TX
5. TyRae Thornton, DB, Houston, TX
6. Isaiah Richardson, DB, Richmond, TX
7. Randall Royall, LB, Houston, TX
8. Austin Trammell, WR, Spring, TX
9. Garrett Grammer, LB, Rosenburg, TX
10. Christopher Boudreaux, WR, Beaumont, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.3 ppg	10	93
Rushing	169.7 ypg	8	72
Passing	215.2 ypg	8	80
Total	384.8 ypg	7	86
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	37.3 ppg	12	114
Rushing	216.8 ypg	11	101
Passing	287.7 ypg	12	123
Total	504.5 ypg	12	123
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.58	11	112

STAT CORNER

-2.3

Rice was outgained by 2.3 yards per play in 2016, easily the worst in FBS. Nothing else matters with that disadvantage.

OFFENSE Quarterback is up for grabs with Jackson Tyner, J.T. Granato and Sam Glaesmann vying for the job. Tyner saw the most action of the group, playing in five games and throwing for nearly 200 yards and two touchdowns in a C-USA win over UTEP. He started the final game at Stanford. Incoming freshman Miklo Smalls could also emerge as a candidate.

Running back Sam Stewart managed 479 yards despite making only four starts due to a knee injury. When healthy, Stewart has the ability to be an every-down back, and he also catch passes out of the backfield. Emmanuel Esukpa is a 230-pound bruiser in the mold of Charles Ross from a few years ago. The plan is to use him in short-yardage situations. Austin Walter is a multi-purpose threat at running back who can line up in the slot. "He's somebody we want on the field," coach David Bailiff says.

A year after being ravaged by injuries, the Owls return all five starters on the offensive line, led by center Trey Martin and left guard Peter Godber. Martin missed time with a foot injury and underwent offseason shoulder surgery, although he will be cleared in time for fall camp.

At 6'4" and 205 pounds, redshirt freshman receiver Aaron Cephus gives the Owls' a big-play target. Kylen Granson shed his redshirt at midseason and finished second in receptions (33) and yards (381).

DEFENSE No stranger to these parts, Brian Stewart was hired as defensive coordinator to turn around a unit that ranked among the worst in FBS in several major categories. The Owls allowed 30 or more points in nine games while allowing more than 500 yards per game. Stewart brings a wealth of experience, including stints as defensive coordinator of the Dallas Cowboys (2007-08), University of Houston (2010-11) and Maryland (2012-14).

Gone is the Owls' 4-2-5 scheme, replaced by what Bailiff says will be "multiple fronts" that should take some pressure off the secondary. "I needed to change," Bailiff says of the 4-2-5 he had used since his days at New Mexico.

The Owls lost just two seniors on defense and return seven starters, led by All-Conference USA first-team linebacker Emmanuel Ellerbee, who had 118 tackles a year ago.

The defensive line should be strength with Blain Padgett capable of being an all-conference performer and a combination of Brian Womac and Graysen Schantz at the other end position. Zach Abercrumbia will fill one of the spots in the middle after being lost in Week 4 with a wrist injury.

J.T. Ibe provided a physical, big hitter at free safety, and KAT Destri White was one of the team's top players at the end of last season. Cornerback Justin Bickham is set to return after missing all of last season with an ACL injury. One area that needs improvement: The Owls' 11 forced turnovers were among the fewest in the nation.

SPECIALISTS The Owls cast a wide net in search of a kicker, ultimately signing Will Harrison from the state of Indiana to compete with Haden Tobola. Tobola has made only 62.5 percent of his field goal attempts (15-of-24) the past two seasons. Jack Fox will handle the punt and kickoff duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS This is a critical year for Bailiff, who has two years left on his contract. Entering his 11th season, Bailiff is under pressure to turn around a program that has gone 5-7 and 3-9 the past two seasons since going to a school-record three straight bowls. The margin of error is slim at a small FBS school like Rice, so avoiding a repeat of the injury bug is paramount for a bounce-back season. The opening month is a grind, with four of the first five games on the road, including the opener against Stanford in Sydney, Australia.



EMMANUEL ELLERBEE

"To be honest, they really struggled last year in every phase of the game. They just didn't have very much playmaking and speed overall."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	5	Lance Wright (Jr.)	28	Aaron Cephus (Fr.)
WR	11	Parker Smith (Jr.)	81	Cameron Johnson (So.)
WR	18	Kylen Granson (So.)	1	Aston Walter (Jr.)
LT	66	**Calvin Anderson (Jr.)**	75	Matt Terrill (So.)
LG	51	**Peter Godber (Sr.)**	79	Joseph Dill (So.)
C	54	**Trey Martin (Sr.)**	60	Crockett Mokry (So.)
RG	56	**Cory Klingler (Jr.)**	70	Kenneth Thompson (Sr.)
RT	76	**Sam Pierce (Jr.)**	77	Uzoma Osuji (Fr.)
TE	88	Robby Wells III(Sr.)	80	Jonathan Sanchez (Fr.)
QB	14	Jackson Tyner (So.)	15	J.T. Granato (So.)
RB	24	Samuel Stewart (Jr.)	2	Austin Walter (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	90	**Blain Padgett (Jr.)**	40	Brady Wright (Jr.)
DT	57	Preston Gordon (Jr.)	91	**Carl Thompson (Jr.)**
NT	96	Zach Abercrumbia (Jr.)	95	Roe Wilkins (So.)
DE	44	**Brian Womac (Sr.)**	94	Graysen Schantz (Sr.)
MLB	49	DJ Green (Sr.)	21	Nick Uretsky (Sr.)
SLB	58	**Emmanuel Ellerbee (Sr.)**	15	Uzoma Akunebu (So.)
KAT	6	**Destri White (Sr.)**	14	Christian Bertrand (Jr.)
CB	19	**V.J. Banks (Sr.)**	3	Brandon Douglas-Dotson (Jr.)
CB	12	D'Angelo Ellis (So.)	7	Justin Bickham (So.)
SS	31	Martin Nwakamma (Jr.)	8	Dylan Silcox (Fr.)
FS	17	**J.T. Ibe (Jr.)**	28	Cole Thomas (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		William Harrison (Fr.)	KR	2	Austin Walter (Jr.)
P	2	Jack Fox (Jr.)	PR	25	Nahshon Ellerbe (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jackson Tyner, 67-32-318-1, 2 TDs
Rushing: Samuel Stewart, 76 att., 479 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Kylen Granson, 33 rec., 381 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Emmanuel Ellerbee, 118
Sacks: Emmanuel Ellerbee, 3.5; Preston Gordon, 3.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: David Bailiff
Record at School: 56-69 (10 years)
Career Record: 77-84 (13 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Billy Lynch
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Stewart
Houston, TX • Rice Stadium (47,000)

Rice Athletics/Tim Cowie

SOUTHERN MISS GOLDEN EAGLES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **93** • C-USA WEST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Kentucky
Sept.	9	Southern
Sept.	16	at UL Monroe
Sept.	30	North Texas
Oct.	7	at UTSA
Oct.	14	UTEP
Oct.	21	at Louisiana Tech
Oct.	28	UAB
Nov.	4	at Tennessee
Nov.	11	at Rice
Nov.	18	Charlotte
Nov.	25	at Marshall

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 C-USA

Sept.	3	at Kentucky	W	44-35
Sept.	10	Savannah State	W	56-0
Sept.	17	Troy	L	31-37
Sept.	24	at UTEP	W	34-7
Oct.	1	Rice	W	44-28
Oct.	8	at UTSA	L	32-55
Oct.	15	at LSU	L	10-45
Oct.	29	Marshall	W	24-14
Nov.	5	Charlotte	L	27-38
Nov.	12	at Old Dominion	L	35-51
Nov.	19	at North Texas	L	23-29
Nov.	25	Louisiana Tech	W	39-24
Dec.	17	vs. Louisiana #	W	28-21

#New Orleans Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Emanuel Dabney, DB, Jackson, MS
2. Paul Gainer, OL, Gautier, MS
3. Jaylond Adams, WR, Adamsville, AL
4. WyDale Flott, DB, Saraland, AL
5. Tim Jones, WR, Biloxi, MS
6. Freddie Hartz, LB, Morton, MS
7. Jimmie Terry, OL, Madison, MS*
8. Travion Clayton, OL, Macclenny, FL
9. Steven Anderson, QB, Live Oak, FL
10. Tahj Sykes, DL, Columbus, MS

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.8 ppg	5	41
Rushing	174.5 ypg	7	62
Passing	298.2 ypg	4	16
Total	472.8 ypg	4	21
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.5 ppg	4	74
Rushing	149.9 ypg	4	46
Passing	174.9 ypg	1	10
Total	324.8 ypg	1	15
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-17	-1.31	13	125

STAT CORNER

-6.1

USM's field position margin of minus-6.1 yards per drive was 124th in FBS and 11 yards per drive worse than 2015's margin.

OFFENSE Southern Miss' scoring average dropped by a full touchdown per game from 2015 to '16, and the departure of the most prolific passer in school history, Nick Mullens, doesn't bode well for reversing the trend. Last year's top backup, Keon Howard, started two games in place of an injured Mullens as a true freshman but struggled mightily, completing just 44 percent of his passes with four interceptions in losses to Old Dominion and North Texas. Howard split first-team reps in the spring with Kwadra Griggs, a junior college transfer who sat out 2016 due to academics.

If either quarterback takes hold of the job, the outlook at the other skill positions is more encouraging: Virtually everyone else who touched the ball last year is back, most notably All-Conference USA running back Ito Smith — the only active FBS player with 3,000 yards rushing and 1,000 receiving in his career — and deep threat Allenzae Staggers, another junior college talent who averaged 18.5 yards per catch in his first season on campus. The offensive line is less settled and may rely on some combination of redshirt freshmen and incoming transfers to fill three vacancies in the starting five.

DEFENSE This unit was solid on paper in 2016, finishing first in C-USA in total defense and fourth in scoring. Occasionally it was even dominant, at one point holding Louisiana Tech's gonzo attack to its worst output of the season en route a bowl-clinching, season-saving upset. But it was also prone to random lapses against some of the league's most pedestrian offenses, giving up 55 points to UTSA, 38 to Charlotte and 51 to Old Dominion in games the Golden Eagles were favored to win; instead they lost all three by double digits.

The good news this fall is that the lineup should be about as mature as can be: Every projected starter is a junior or senior, led by an all-senior secondary that led C-USA in passing yards and touchdowns allowed. The bad news: That lineup no longer includes last year's leading tackler, safety D'Nerius Antoine, or the top pass rusher, Dylan Bradley, both of whom were voted first-team all-conference by league coaches. Ideally, their respective torches will be picked up by Tarvarius Moore, a new starter at safety whom coach Jay Hopson has praised as a next-level prospect, and Xavier "PawPaw" Thigpen, who has 9.5 sacks over the past two seasons.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Parker Shaunfield was a revelation as a sophomore, connecting on 12-of-14 field goal attempts — half of them coming from beyond 40 yards. Shaunfield could take on punting and/or kickoff duties this season as well, depending on the development of redshirt freshman Zac Everett and incoming freshman Briggs Bourgeois.

FINAL ANALYSIS Southern Miss opened 2016 as a heavy favorite to win Conference USA, and in that context it's hard to spin the 7-6 finish in Hopson's first season as anything but a wasted opportunity. Prior to last year, USM looked like a program on the rise, climbing from the depths of a 23-game losing streak in 2012-13 to mount a surprise run to the C-USA title game in 2015. But the promised breakthrough in Mullens' senior year never materialized (in part due to his health), which makes a serious run in his absence that much more unlikely.

Still, year in and year out the talent level in Hattiesburg is arguably the best in the conference, and this year's lineup just so happens to be dominated by upperclassmen. With even a modicum of consistency behind center, the Eagles could be favored in every C-USA game. The real question, again, is which team will show up from one week to the next.



ITO SMITH

"They've got three really good running backs, but they're rotating in new guys on the O-line so it might take a little while for them to figure it out."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	15	**Allenzae Staggers (Sr.)**	83	Chase Whitehead (Jr.)
WR	88	**Isaiah Jones (Sr.)**	1	Tyre'oune Holmes (Sr.)
WR	18	Korey Robertson (Jr.)	6	Marquise Ricard (Sr.)
LT	76	**Ty Pollard (So.)**	73	Cru Birdyshaw (Fr.)
LG	63	Arvin Fletcher (Fr.)		Jimmie Terry (Jr.)
C	52	Tyler Stutzman (Sr.)	66	Wyatt Richthofen (Fr.)
RG	78	**Devin Farrior (Sr.)**	72	Jacob Johnson (Fr.)
RT	74	Jerry Harris (Sr.)	79	Drake Dorbeck (So.)
TE	11	**Julian Allen (Sr.)**	22	Jay'Shawn Washington (Jr.)
QB	7	Kwadra Griggs (Jr.)	2	Keon Howard (So.)
RB	25	**Ito Smith (Sr.)**	24	George Payne (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	32	**Xavier Thigpen (Sr.)**	99	Jacques Turner (Fr.)
DT	9	Draper Riley (Sr.)		Delmond Landry (Jr.)
DT	43	LaDarius Harris (Jr.)	90	Rod Crayton (Sr.)
DE	22	Darian Yancey (Jr.)	30	Paxton Schrimsher (So.)
LB	37	Sherrod Ruff (Sr.)	26	Jeremy Sangster (Jr.)
LB	5	Walden Davis (Jr.)	41	Racheem Boothe (Fr.)
CB	3	**Cornell Armstrong (Sr.)**		Emanuel Dabney (Fr.)
CB	2	**Trae Collins (Sr.)**	19	Curtis Mikell (Sr.)
NB	13	**Picasso Nelson Jr. (Sr.)**	7	Jomez Applewhite (Sr.)
SS	18	Tarvarius Moore (Sr.)	33	T.J. McGinnis (Fr.)
FS	6	Kelsey Douglas (Sr.)	14	Demetrius Market (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	21	Parker Shaunfield (Jr.)	KR	8	Tez Parks (Jr.)
P	29	Zac Everett (Fr.)	PR	15	Allenzae Staggers (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Keon Howard, 50-22-365-4, 1 TD
Rushing: Ito Smith, 265 att., 1,459 yds., 17 TDs
Receiving: Allenzae Staggers, 63 rec., 1,165 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Picasso Nelson Jr., 48
Sacks: Xavier Thigpen, 5.0
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jay Hopson
Record at School: 7-6 (1 year)
Career Record: 39-23 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Shannon Dawson
Defensive Coordinator: Tony Pecoraro
Hattiesburg, MS • M.M. Roberts Stadium (36,000)

Southern Miss Athletics

UAB BLAZERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **130** • C-USA WEST PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 1-7 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Alabama A&M
Sept.	9	at Ball State
Sept.	16	Coastal Carolina
Sept.	23	at North Texas
Oct.	7	Louisiana Tech
Oct.	14	Middle Tennessee
Oct.	21	at Charlotte
Oct.	28	at Southern Miss
Nov.	4	Rice
Nov.	11	at UTSA
Nov.	18	at Florida
Nov.	25	UTEP

2014 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-6 , 4-4 C-USA

Aug.	30	Troy	W	48-10
Sept.	6	at Mississippi State	L	34-47
Sept.	13	Alabama A&M	W	41-14
Sept.	27	FIU	L	20-34
Oct.	4	at Western Kentucky	W	42-39
Oct.	11	North Texas	W	56-21
Oct.	18	at Middle Tennessee	L	22-34
Oct.	25	at Arkansas	L	17-45
Nov.	1	at FAU	W	31-28
Nov.	8	Louisiana Tech	L	24-40
Nov.	22	Marshall	L	18-23
Nov.	29	at Southern Miss	W	45-24

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Thomas Johnston, LB, Spanish Fort, AL
2. Anthony Rush, DL, Raleigh, NC*
3. Eugene Minter, WR, Birmingham, AL
4. Jonathan Haden, RB, Upper Marlboro, MD*
5. Patrick Nuss, OL, Birmingham, AL
6. Kelton Brown, OL, Tylertown, MS*
7. Logan Arnold, WR, Hazel Green, AL
8. Chigozie Onyekwere, CB, Washington, DC*
9. Cameron Taylor, WR, Clayton, OH*
10. Cedric Battle, RB, Wichita Falls, TX*

*junior college transfer

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.2 ppg	4	38
Rushing	212.1 ypg	3	33
Passing	219.8 ypg	7	74
Total	431.8 ypg	4	45
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.9 ppg	8	88
Rushing	175.1 ypg	7	77
Passing	231.0 ypg	7	72
Total	406.1 ypg	8	75
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-2	-0.17	9	78

STAT CORNER

3-1

UAB went 3-1 on the road in Conference USA games in 2014 – its last season of competition – with wins over Western Kentucky, FAU and Southern Miss.

OFFENSE Veteran Les Koenning was hired to direct an offense that wants to make its mark with its toughness up front and with the running game. Former Middle Tennessee quarterback A.J. Erdely and 2015 Alabama Mr. Football Tyler Johnston are battling for the starting quarterback job. Both have good enough arms and can make plays with their feet but have to limit turnovers. UAB is in trouble if both players get hurt — and as much as they will run the ball, the quarterbacks will take some hits.

At running back, former walk-on James Noble outperformed scholarship players Lucious Stanley and Kalin Heath in the spring, and UAB moved Donnie Lee from linebacker to running back. Noble is only about 5'7" and 180 pounds, so Stanley and Lee will be counted on to get the tougher yards. Coach Bill Clark is looking for a go-to back out of those four, although if D.J. Law (injury) and Cedric Battle (academics) return this fall, there will be even more competition. Freshman Spencer Brown, at 230 pounds, is another one to watch. UAB had a playmaker at running back, but Greg Bryant Jr. was tragically killed in a highway shooting in South Florida in May 2016.

UAB's run game will have to be on point, because the Blazers don't have much proven depth at the receiver position. Collin Lisa, who began his career at UAB in 2014 before playing a season at Buffalo, will be the go-to receiver and is in line for a big season. Jonathan Haden, whose older brother Joe is an NFL cornerback, is electric in the open field. UAB is looking for consistency on the outside, and 6'5" late signee Justin Walker could provide that along with Xavier Ubosi and Ronnie Turner. UAB will use tight ends Logan Scott and Thair Blakes plenty in the passing game.

UAB signed four offensive linemen in December, and all four will factor into the rotation. The left side — tackle James Davis and guard Chris Schleuger — was the most consistent in the spring.

DEFENSE Shaq Jones is the veteran presence on a defense led by first-year coordinator David Reeves. Jones was UAB's third-leading tackler in 2014 and stayed with the Blazers despite opportunities to transfer elsewhere. The Blazers are big up front and need 6'5", 352-pound Anthony Rush to take a big step forward.

Freshman Thomas Johnston is talented enough to play from Day 1 in the linebacker rotation. Walk-on Fitzgerald Mofor has been one of the top playmakers since he stepped foot on campus.

Veteran cornerbacks Jordan Petty and Darious Williams, who were both part of the 2014 UAB team, will lead the secondary. Darez Diggs is the brother of Minnesota Vikings receiver Stefon Diggs and one of several long, versatile athletes in the back four. Louisville transfer Duke Culver will be the nickel.

SPECIALISTS Nick Vogel returned to UAB from Southern Miss and is unchallenged as the team's placekicker. The Blazers signed Australian Joel Dixon to handle punting duties. Lisa, Andre Wilson and Demetrius Davis are shifty in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS You can never count out a team coached by Clark. The Blazers were among the worst teams in the country going into 2014, but he coached them to a six-win season. UAB has a deep front seven on defense and should be physical on the offensive line. With a new team, it's hard to pinpoint many definite wins on the schedule, but Clark signed several junior college players and Division-I transfers so that the Blazers would be competitive from the start. If some playmakers can emerge on the offensive side of the ball, UAB can win a few games in its first season back from a two-year hiatus.



SHAQ JONES

"I have to commend (Bill Clark) because I don't think the school would have started the program back if he hadn't been there. He's a good coach."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (0)

WR	13	Collin Lisa (Jr.)	10	Sedarian Copeland (Jr.)	
WR	7	Xavier Ubosi (Jr.)	8	Ronald Turner Jr. (Jr.)	
WR	3	Andre Wilson (Jr.)	1	Jonathan Haden (Jr.)	
LT	51	James Davis (Jr.)	60	Kelton Brown (Jr.)	
LG	59	Chris Schleuger (Sr.)	75	Natrell Curtis (Jr.)	
C	72	Lee Dufour (So.)	50	David Galten (Jr.)	
RG	58	Malique Johnson (Jr.)	71	Rishard Cook (Jr.)	
RT	57	Justice Powers (So.)	74	Bryant Novick (So.)	
TE	44	Logan Scott (Jr.)	85	Thair Blakes (Jr.)	
QB	11	A.J. Erdely (Jr.)	17	Tyler Johnston (Fr.)	
RB	24	James Noble (Jr.)	4	Donnie Lee (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (1)

DE	41	Quindarius Thagard (Jr.)	97	Stacy Keely (Jr.)
DT	47	Anthony Rush (Jr.)	19	Darryl Waters (Sr.)
DT	93	Teko Powell (Sr.)	99	Garrett Marino (Jr.)
JACK	42	**Shaq Jones (Sr.)**	13	Noah Jones (Jr.)
LB	52	Fitzgerald Mofor (Jr.)	25	Craig Kanyangarara (Jr.)
LB	23	Tevin Crews (Sr.)		Thomas Johnston (Fr.)
LB	5	Zachary Williams (Jr.)	27	Chris Woolbright (Jr.)
CB	17	Jordan Petty (Jr.)		Duke Culver (So.)
CB	1	Darious Williams (Sr.)	2	Darez Diggs (Jr.)
S	3	Will Dawkins (So.)	21	Mark Jonassaint (Jr.)
S	10	Garrison Mitchell (Jr.)	22	Broderick Thomas (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	19	Nick Vogel (So.)	KR	20	Demetrius Davis (Fr.)
P	37	Joel Dixon (Jr.)	PR	13	Collin Lisa (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

2014 LEADERS

Passing: Cody Clements, 275-183-2,227-7, 14 TDs
Rushing: Jordan Howard, 206 att., 1,587 yds., 13 TDs
Receiving: J.J. Nelson, 35 rec., 655 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Jake Ganus, 70
Sacks: Diaheem Watkins, 10.0
Interceptions: Lamarcus Farmer, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bill Clark
Record at School: 6-6 (1 year)
Career Record: 17-10 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Les Koenning
Defensive Coordinator: David Reeves
Birmingham, AL • Legion Field (72,000)

UAB Athletics

UTEP MINERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **120** • C-USA WEST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 3-5 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Oklahoma
Sept. 9	Rice
Sept. 16	Arizona
Sept. 23	at New Mexico State
Sept. 30	at Army
Oct. 7	Western Kentucky
Oct. 14	at Southern Miss
Oct. 28	UTSA
Nov. 4	at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 11	at North Texas
Nov. 18	Louisiana Tech
Nov. 25	at UAB

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 C-USA

Sept. 3	New Mexico State	W	38-22
Sept. 10	at Texas	L	7-41
Sept. 17	Army	L	14-66
Sept. 24	Southern Miss	L	7-34
Oct. 1	at Louisiana Tech	L	7-28
Oct. 8	FIU	L	21-35
Oct. 22	at UTSA	(ot) W	52-49
Oct. 29	Old Dominion	L	21-31
Nov. 5	Houston Baptist	W	42-10
Nov. 12	at Florida Atlantic	L	31-35
Nov. 19	at Rice	L	24-44
Nov. 26	North Texas	W	52-24

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Josh Fields, RB, El Paso, TX
2. Alex Fernandes, QB, Austin, TX
3. Calvin Brownholtz, QB, Carmichael, CA
4. Kobie Herring, LB, Refugio, TX
5. David Lucero, TE, Holtville, CA*
6. Trace Mascorro, DL, Refugio, TX
7. Cutter Leftwich, OL, El Paso, TX
8. Kalaii Griffin, LB, Bethesda, MD*
9. Jamar Smith, LB, Lyons, GA*
10. Forest McKee, FB, Las Cruces, NM

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.3 ppg	9	82
Rushing	185.5 ypg	5	53
Passing	183.7 ypg	13	103
Total	369.2 ypg	11	102
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	34.9 ppg	9	105
Rushing	210.3 ypg	10	96
Passing	209.0 ypg	3	41
Total	419.3 ypg	5	70
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

+1.8

UTEP's yardage margin improved by 1.8 yards per play (1.1 on offense, 0.7 on defense), second-best in FBS. But the win total fell.

OFFENSE UTEP is in a different situation from the previous two years, as it enters the season settled at quarterback but looking for a running back to replace the school's all-time leading rusher Aaron Jones.

Junior quarterback Ryan Metz completed a long climb to the top of the depth chart with steady improvement, and he and whoever takes the featured tailback role in a run-first offense will lean on a big, talented, experienced line led by All-America guard Will Hernandez. The other four linemen all have starting experience. The questions will be with the tackles — sophomore Greg Long and junior Jerrod Brooks — but they are the type of physical specimens coach Sean Kugler promised to feature when he arrived five years ago.

Replacing Jones, who rushed for a school-record 1,773 yards (on an impressive 7.7-yard average) in 2016, will probably fall to true freshman Josh Fields after projected starter Quadraiz Wadley went down with a season-ending shoulder injury in the spring. Fields, a local product, was the top prospect in the Miners' 2017 recruiting class.

Most of the wide receiving corps is back, though UTEP will have to lean on a new tight end to replace last year's leading pass catcher Hayden Plinke, and that will probably be junior college transfer David Lucero. Warren Redix, Eddie Sinegal, Tyler Batson and Kavika Johnson are part of a receiving corps that is deep but is still looking for a big-play dimension.

DEFENSE UTEP is hoping a big group of returnees can hasten the rebuilding, which is a normal state of affairs on a defense that has been among the nation's worst for more than a decade.

This is second year of a switch to coordinator Tom Mason's 3-4 system from a 4-2-5, and the Miners are a lot more set at the back end than on the front seven. Star safety Devin Cockrell is the leader of a secondary that returns three starters, and the other one, safety Michael Lewis, started two years ago before missing 2016 to an academic-related redshirt.

The Miners have a pair of veteran inside linebackers in Alvin Jones and Dante Lovilotte. Where they need improvement — after the team managed only 14 sacks and 11 takeaways in 2016 — is from their outside linebackers, a group that consists of several converted defensive ends.

The defensive line looks to be a revolving door, and a young one at that, with sophomores Gene Hopkins, Denzel Chukwukelu and Chris Richardson likely to get the first cracks.

SPECIALISTS Only two FBS teams made fewer field goals than UTEP last year (five) — and the Miners actually had a good placekicker, Jay Mattox. They now don't have a placekicker who has appeared in a game. The search will continue through the summer. Other than that they are set. Alan Luna is a proven commodity at punter. Terry Juniel largely fixed the punt return game last season, and Walter Dawn should be a solid kickoff returner. UTEP's coverage units usually excel.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Miners could take the field with 15 players with starting experience (the good news) returning from a team that was 4–8 (the bad news). The party line is that improvement in the second year of new offensive and defensive systems, combined with a more settled quarterback situation, will get the team back to a bowl for the first time since 2014. The fear is that a tougher schedule, both in and out of conference, the loss of one of their all-time greats in Jones and a lack of proven playmakers on both sides of the ball will result in another losing season.



ALVIN JONES

"I thought that their offensive line was the biggest and most physical we played in the league, and four of those guys are coming back."
– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	10	Warren Redix (Jr.)	7	Kavika Johnson (Jr.)	
WR	1	Tyler Batson (Sr.)	2	Terry Juniel (Jr.)	
LT	77	Greg Long (So.)	63	Josiah Gray (Fr.)	
LG	**76**	**Will Hernandez (Sr.)**	73	Bobby DeHaro (Fr.)	
C	**65**	**Derron Gatewood (Jr.)**	**58**	**Tanner Stallings (Sr.)**	
RG	75	Derek Elmendorff (Sr.)	69	Markos Lujan (So.)	
RT	72	Jerrod Brooks (Jr.)	61	Ruben Guerra (So.)	
TE	18	David Lucero (Jr.)	81	Sterling Napier (Sr.)	
QB	**12**	**Ryan Metz (Jr.)**	8	Zack Greenlee (Sr.)	
FB	15	Kevin Dove (So.)	35	David Jackson (Sr.)	
TB		Joshua Fields (Fr.)	26	Walter Dawn (So.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	10	Chris Richardson (So.)	**55**	**Mike Sota (Jr.)**	
NG	11	Denzel Chukwukelu (So.)	56	Sky Logan (Sr.)	
DE	13	Gene Hopkins (So.)	92	Christian Buckingham (Jr.)	
OLB	7	Kalaii Griffin (So.)	19	Treyvon Hughes (Jr.)	
ILB	**3**	**Dante Lovilotte (Sr.)**	8	Johnny Jones (Sr.)	
ILB	**16**	**Alvin Jones (Sr.)**		Jamar Smith (Jr.)	
OLB	33	Lawrence Montegut (Sr.)	**9**	**Jayson VanHook (So.)**	
CB	**5**	**Nik Needham (Jr.)**	23	Justin Rogers (So.)	
CB	**1**	**Kalon Beverly (Jr.)**	14	Alex Jean Charles (Sr.)	
SS	**27**	**Devin Cockrell (Sr.)**	24	Kahani Smith (Jr.)	
FS	2	Michael Lewis (So.)	4	Broderick Harrell (Fr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	49	Jason Filley (Jr.)	KR	26	Walter Dawn (So.)
P	46	Alan Luna (Sr.)	PR	2	Terry Juniel (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ryan Metz, 201-130-1,375-4, 14 TDs
Rushing: Quadraiz Wadley, 47 att., 168 yds., 0 TDs
Receiving: Eddie Sinegal, 29 rec., 338 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: Alvin Jones, 93
Sacks: Alvin Jones, 2.5
Interceptions: Kalon Beverly, 1; Justin Rogers, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Sean Kugler
Record at School: 18-31 (4 years)
Career Record: 18-31 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brent Pease
Defensive Coordinator: Tom Mason
El Paso, TX • Sun Bowl (51,500)

UTEP Athletics

UTSA ROADRUNNERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **94** • C-USA WEST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 C-USA**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Houston	
Sept. 9	at Baylor	
Sept. 16	Southern	
Sept. 23	at Texas State	
Oct. 7	Southern Miss	
Oct. 14	at North Texas	
Oct. 21	Rice	
Oct. 28	at UTEP	
Nov. 4	at FIU	
Nov. 11	UAB	
Nov. 18	Marshall	
Nov. 25	at Louisiana Tech	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 5-3 C-USA

Sept. 3	Alabama State	W	26-13
Sept. 10	at Colorado State	L	14-23
Sept. 16	Arizona State	L	28-32
Sept. 24	at Old Dominion	L	19-33
Oct. 8	Southern Miss	W	55-32
Oct. 15	at Rice	W	14-13
Oct. 22	UTEP (ot)	L	49-52
Oct. 29	North Texas	W	31-17
Nov. 5	at Middle Tennessee	W	45-25
Nov. 12	at Louisiana Tech	L	35-63
Nov. 19	at Texas A&M	L	10-23
Nov. 26	Charlotte	W	33-14
Dec. 17	vs. New Mexico #	L	20-23

#New Mexico Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Samuel Barnes, CB, Richmond, TX
2. Tay'lor Perry, S, Crosby, TX
3. Frank Harris, QB, Schertz, TX
4. B.J. Daniels, RB, Melbourne, FL
5. Javontavius Mosley, CB, Tyler, TX
6. Chance McLeod, TE, Victoria, TX
7. Tariq Woolen, WR, Fort Worth, TX
8. Morris Joseph Jr., DL, Orange, TX
9. Jaylon Haynes, DE, Wharton, TX
10. De'Marco Guidry, LB, La Marque, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.2 ppg	6	65
Rushing	161.8 ypg	9	83
Passing	213.6 ypg	9	82
Total	375.5 ypg	8	97
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.9 ppg	3	63
Rushing	162.5 ypg	6	54
Passing	229.5 ypg	5	70
Total	392.0 ypg	4	55
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	4	42

STAT CORNER

+8.5

Vegas consistently underestimated UTSA. The Roadrunners overachieved their spread by 8.5 points per game, third in FBS.

OFFENSE The pieces are in place for UTSA to continue its improvement on offense in Year 2 of the Frank Wilson era. The Roadrunners progressed from 104th to 65th in points scored per game last season en route to the New Mexico Bowl.

Quarterback Dalton Sturm is back for his senior season after an inconsistent campaign that still saw him pile up 20 passing touchdowns, four rushing TDs and just six interceptions. The dual-threat signal caller had four games in which he completed at least 65 percent of his passes and four in which he was under 50 percent, so consistency will be a key factor for him.

With solid depth at wide receiver, which includes productive returning starters (and brothers) Josh Stewart and Kerry Thomas Jr., and a running back (Jalen Rhodes) who had 827 rushing yards and nine total TDs in a reserve role, the biggest variable for the 2017 UTSA offense is the offensive line. The Roadrunners have surrendered a mind-boggling 87 sacks the last two seasons, a number that must come down if they want to contend for the division title. The interior of the line returns, but both tackles will be new. Junior college transfer Josh Dunlop is expected to lock down one side, while Reed Darragh will battle for the other.

DEFENSE Seven starters return from a unit that made similar gains as the offense, improving from 101st to 63rd in points allowed. The player with the most NFL potential on the UTSA roster is end Marcus Davenport, a second-team All-C-USA selection a year ago who is primed for a monster senior season. He plays his defensive end spot standing up and has a knack for getting pressure on the quarterback and forcing runs back inside. Junior Kevin Strong Jr. moved from nose tackle to end last season and was very productive, and King Newton (son of Nate Newton) and Baylen Baker will see their roles expand on the interior this season.

Both linebackers in UTSA's 4-2-5 scheme return, and both are very good. Josiah Tauaefa was a Freshman All-American last year after setting a school record with 115 tackles, and senior La'Kel Bass is an all-league candidate as a senior after racking up 87 tackles a year ago.

Two new safeties will join senior Nate Gaines along the backline, and Austin Jupe, Devron Davis and Teddrick McGhee give UTSA three very capable corners.

SPECIALISTS UTSA will split its kicking duties between kickoff specialist Daniel Portillo and placekicker Victor Falcon. Falcon was just 2-of-6 from beyond 40 yards as a sophomore, so improvement is needed. Junior Yannis Routsas averaged only 42 yards per punt, but four of his high-hanging kicks were fumbled in 2016, and all four led to UTSA points. Explosive wide receiver Matt Guidry is the top return specialist.

FINAL ANALYSIS Can UTSA win its first C-USA division title in the seventh year of the program? That is the next step for the Roadrunners, who broke through in Year 6 with a bowl appearance. And while UTSA will not be the preseason favorite, a favorable schedule could have it in the mix down the stretch. The Roadrunners will not face the top teams from the East Division, and Louisiana Tech does not show up until the final game of the season.

The defense will likely show progress across the board. If the offensive line can improve its pass blocking, UTSA will be able to put up plenty of points. Depth is still an issue on both sides of the ball, but a strong recruiting class should be able to respond if called upon. A second straight bowl game for the Roadrunners is a reasonable expectation.



JOSIAH TAUAEFA

"They do a really good job of running the football. Offensive line is a strength for them. They have two good running backs."

– An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	7	**Kerry Thomas Jr. (Sr.)**	18	Peyton Hall (Jr.)	
WR	80	**Josh Stewart (Sr.)**	82	Dannon Cavil (Sr.)	
WR	86	Brady Jones (Sr.)	4	Marquez McNair (Sr.)	
TE	81	Shaq Williams (Sr.)	87	Robert Ursua (Jr.)	
LT	64	Josh Dunlop (So.)	77	Zach Pare (Fr.)	
LG	67	**Kyle McKinney (Sr.)**	68	Austin Pratt (Sr.)	
C	68	**Austin Pratt (Sr.)**	60	Juan Perez-Isidoro (Sr.)	
RG	65	**Stefan Beard (Sr.)**	73	David Anzaldua (Jr.)	
RT	74	Reed Darragh (Sr.)	66	Josh Oatis (Fr.)	
QB	14	**Dalton Sturm (Sr.)**	12	Manny Harris (So.)	
RB	28	Jalen Rhodes (Jr.)	31	Tyrell Clay (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	54	**Kevin Strong Jr. (Jr.)**	96	Franklin Uesi (Sr.)
DT	99	Baylen Baker (So.)	92	King Newton (So.)
DE	94	Solomon Wise (So.)	91	Jarrod Carter-McLin (So.)
DE	93	**Marcus Davenport (Sr.)**	90	Eric Banks (So.)
LB	42	**La'Kel Bass (Sr.)**	32	Anthony Hickey (Sr.)
LB	55	**Josiah Tauaefa (So.)**	9	Marcos Curry (Sr.)
CB	41	**Austin Jupe (Sr.)**	30	Stanley Dye Jr. (Jr.)
CB	27	**Teddrick McGhee (So.)**	1	Devron Davis (Sr.)
S	11	**Nate Gaines (Sr.)**	25	Carl Austin III (Jr.)
S	14	C.J. Levine (Jr.)	21	Brenndan Johnson (Fr.)
S	23	Darryl Godfrey (Jr.)	12	Andrew Martel (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	57	Victor Falcon (Jr.)	KR	89	Matt Guidry (So.)
P	39	Yannis Routsas (Jr.)	PR	89	Matt Guidry (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Dalton Sturm, 299-169-2,170-6, 20 TDs
Rushing: Jalen Rhodes, 155 att., 827 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Josh Stewart, 36 rec., 682 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Josiah Tauaefa, 115
Sacks: Marcus Davenport, 6.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Frank Wilson
Record at School: 6-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 6-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Frank Scelfo
Defensive Coordinator: Pete Golding
San Antonio, TX • Alamodome (65,000)

UTSA Athletics/Jeff Huehn

MAC PREVIEW



LOGAN WOODSIDE

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	EAST	WEST
1	MIAMI REDHAWKS 8-5, 6-2	TOLEDO ROCKETS 10-3, 6-2
2	OHIO BOBCATS 7-5, 5-3	WESTERN MICHIGAN BRONCOS 7-5, 5-3
3	AKRON ZIPS 5-7, 4-4	NORTHERN ILLINOIS HUSKIES 6-6, 5-3
4	BOWLING GREEN FALCONS 4-8, 3-5	EASTERN MICHIGAN EAGLES 5-7, 4-4
5	BUFFALO BULLS 3-9, 2-6	CENTRAL MICHIGAN CHIPPEWAS 5-7, 4-4
6	KENT STATE GOLDEN FLASHES 3-9, 2-6	BALL STATE CARDINALS 4-8, 2-6

MAC Conference Championship: Toledo over Miami

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Cotton Bowl: Wisconsin 24, Western Michigan 16
Camellia Bowl: Appalachian State 31, Toledo 28
Dollar General Bowl: Troy 28, Ohio 23
Bahamas Bowl: Old Dominion 24, Eastern Michigan 20
Miami Beach Bowl: Tulsa 55, Central Michigan 10
St. Petersburg Bowl: Mississippi State 17, Miami 16

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Frisco Bowl: Toledo vs. Memphis
Famous Idaho Potato Bowl:
Western Michigan vs. San Diego State
Camellia Bowl: Northern Illinois vs. Arkansas State
Dollar General Bowl: Miami vs. Appalachian State
Bahamas Bowl: Ohio vs. Southern Miss

Woodside: Daniel Miller / The University of Toledo; Gilbert: Ball State Athletics

2016 MAC STANDINGS

EAST	MAC	OVERALL
OHIO	6-2	8-6
MIAMI	6-2	6-7
AKRON	3-5	5-7
BOWLING GREEN	3-5	4-8
KENT STATE	2-6	3-9
BUFFALO	1-7	2-10

WEST	MAC	OVERALL
WESTERN MICHIGAN	8-0	13-1
TOLEDO	6-2	9-4
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	5-3	5-7
EASTERN MICHIGAN	4-4	7-6
CENTRAL MICHIGAN	3-5	6-7
BALL STATE	1-7	4-8

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
AKRON	4	10	8	8	12	7	10
BALL STATE	6	2	10	5	6	12	11
BOWLING GREEN	5	9	5	10	10	10	12
BUFFALO	9	11	12	6	11	5	9
CENTRAL MICHIGAN	12	7	3	9	5	8	7
EASTERN MICHIGAN	3	5	1	11	7	6	8
KENT STATE	8	12	11	12	8	11	3
MIAMI	2	6	4	7	3	2	1
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	10	8	6	3	9	9	4
OHIO	7	4	7	4	4	1	6
TOLEDO	1	3	2	2	2	3	5
WESTERN MICHIGAN	11	1	9	1	1	4	2

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. Toledo 2. Bowling Green 3. Western Michigan 4. Ball State
5. Miami 6. Central Michigan 7. Ohio 8. Northern Illinois 9. Buffalo
10. Eastern Michigan 11. Kent State 12. Akron



JAMES GILBERT

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Logan Woodside	6-2	201	Sr.	Toledo
RB	Jarvion Franklin	6-0	225	Sr.	Western Michigan
RB	James Gilbert	5-8	194	Jr.	Ball State
AP	Nick Holley	5-10	198	Sr.	Kent State
WR	Scott Miller	5-10	160	Jr.	Bowling Green
WR	Cody Thompson	6-2	200	Sr.	Toledo
TE	Tyler Conklin	6-4	240	Sr.	Central Michigan
C	John Keenoy	6-3	300	Jr.	Western Michigan
OL	Tim McAuliffe	6-1	282	Sr.	Bowling Green
OL	Chukwuma Okorafor	6-6	330	Sr.	Western Michigan
OL	Jake Pruehs	6-2	300	Sr.	Ohio
OL	Max Scharping	6-6	312	Jr.	Northern Illinois

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Jon Cunningham	6-0	295	Sr.	Kent State
DL	Jeremiah Harris	6-5	256	Jr.	Eastern Michigan
DL	Joe Ostman	6-3	255	Sr.	Central Michigan
DL	Anthony Winbush	6-1	225	Sr.	Ball State
LB	Ulysees Gilbert III	6-1	225	Jr.	Akron
LB	Malik Fountain	6-2	230	Jr.	Central Michigan
LB	Quentin Poling	6-0	235	Sr.	Ohio
DB	Amari Coleman	5-11	188	Sr.	Central Michigan
DB	Heath Harding	5-10	186	Sr.	Miami
DB	Shawun Lurry	5-8	178	Sr.	Northern Illinois
DB	Darius Phillips	5-10	190	Sr.	Western Michigan

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Louie Zervos	5-9	168	So.	Ohio
P	Joe Davidson	6-7	228	Sr.	Bowling Green
KR	Maurice Thomas	5-11	176	Jr.	Miami
PR	Darius Phillips	5-10	190	Sr.	Western Michigan

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Brogan Roback	6-3	208	Sr.	Eastern Michigan
RB	Jamauri Bogan	5-7	192	Jr.	Western Michigan
RB	Terry Swanson	5-10	200	Sr.	Toledo
AP	James Gardner	6-4	212	Jr.	Miami
WR	Jon'Vea Johnson	6-0	185	Jr.	Toledo
WR	Corey Willis	5-10	175	Sr.	Central Michigan
TE	Nigel Kilby	6-7	239	So.	Eastern Michigan
C	James O'Hagan	6-3	310	Jr.	Buffalo
OL	Ryan Hunter	6-4	321	Sr.	Bowling Green
OL	Jimmy Leatiota	6-3	300	Jr.	Eastern Michigan
OL	Sam McCollum	6-3	309	Jr.	Miami
OL	Elijah Nkansah	6-6	315	Sr.	Toledo

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Olasunkanmi Adeniyi	6-2	252	Jr.	Toledo
DL	Ikeem Allen	6-1	268	Sr.	Miami
DL	Eric Assoua	6-2	240	Jr.	Western Michigan
DL	Gus Schwieterman	6-2	265	Sr.	Bowling Green
LB	Khalil Hodge	6-1	240	Jr.	Buffalo
LB	Robert Spillane	6-2	220	Sr.	Western Michigan
LB	Ja'Wuan Woodley	5-11	233	Sr.	Toledo
DB	Josh Cox	5-11	190	Sr.	Central Michigan
DB	Jerrell Foster	6-0	182	Sr.	Kent State
DB	Javon Hagan	6-0	211	So.	Ohio
DB	Tony Reid	5-11	192	Sr.	Miami

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Paul Fricano	5-10	191	So.	Eastern Michigan
P	Austin Barnes	5-11	217	Sr.	Eastern Michigan
KR	Darius Phillips	5-10	190	Sr.	Western Michigan
PR	Chad Beebe	5-9	182	Sr.	Northern Illinois

AKRON ZIPS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **109** • MAC EAST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 4-4 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Penn State
Sept.	9	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Sept.	16	Iowa State
Sept.	23	at Troy
Sept.	30	at Bowling Green
Oct.	7	Ball State
Oct.	14	at Western Michigan
Oct.	21	at Toledo
Oct.	28	Buffalo
Nov.	7	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	14	Ohio
Nov.	21	Kent State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 MAC

Sept.	3	VMI	W	47-24
Sept.	10	at Wisconsin	L	10-54
Sept.	17	at Marshall	W	65-38
Sept.	24	Appalachian State	L	38-45
Oct.	1	at Kent State	W	31-27
Oct.	8	Miami (Ohio)	W	35-13
Oct.	15	Western Michigan	L	0-41
Oct.	22	at Ball State	W	35-25
Oct.	27	at Buffalo	L	20-41
Nov.	2	Toledo	L	17-48
Nov.	9	Bowling Green	L	28-38
Nov.	22	at Ohio	L	3-9

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Nick Johns, QB, Leesburg, VA*
2. Jeffrey Lubin, DB, Hollywood, FL
3. Alex Ramart, QB, Richmond, TX
4. Reggie Corner Jr., S, Canton, OH
5. Jemarulin Suggs, RB, Akron, OH
6. DeAndre Brimage, DL, Akron, OH
7. Jordyn Riley, DB, Citra, FL
8. Hunter Corne, OL, Dunnellon, FL
9. Dustin Burkhart, WR, Akron, OH
10. Kobie Booker, TE, Barberton, OH

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.4 ppg	5	73
Rushing	132.2 ypg	11	111
Passing	255.3 ypg	4	45
Total	387.4 ypg	9	84
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	33.6 ppg	11	98
Rushing	224.7 ypg	11	107
Passing	241.3 ypg	7	79
Total	466.0 ypg	11	114
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.67	10	114

STAT CORNER

4.2/4.8

Akron averaged 4.2 points per trip inside the 40 (95th in FBS) and allowed 4.8 (91st). That contributed to three losses by 10 points or fewer.

OFFENSE Scoring has not been an issue for the Zips with Thomas Woodson at quarterback. They averaged 33 points in the seven games the 6'1", 233-pound senior started and completed in 2016. However, Woodson missed all or most of five games last season due to a shoulder injury. He's still recovering from surgery and will not be able to throw until June. Nick Johns, a transfer from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M, joined the program in January and ran with the starters during spring practices.

Senior Tra'Von Chapman, who started three games at quarterback last season, has been moved to wide receiver as Akron looks to replace its top two targets from 2016 in Jerome Lane (early NFL Draft entree) and JoJo Natson.

The Zips have not had a 1,000-yard rusher in Terry Bowden's five seasons as head coach. Warren Ball, a graduate transfer from Ohio State who rushed for 181 yards on 25 carries in the first two games last year before suffering a season-ending injury, could become the first if he's able to stay healthy. Ball was granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA.

Four starters return up front for Akron, headed by 300-pound junior right guard Kyle Ritz.

DEFENSE The Zips took a dive last year defensively, surrendering 33.6 points and 466.0 yards per game after a dominant 2015 defense (21.5 ppg, 331.5 ypg) led the program to eight wins and its first bowl victory in the FBS era.

The Zips have an anchor to build around in linebacker Ulysees Gilbert, a 6'1", 225-pound junior who earned first-team All-MAC honors last season after leading the team in tackles (122), tackles for a loss (11.5), sacks (4.0), quarterback hurries (eight) and forced fumbles (two).

Three other starters return on defense, including seniors Darius Copeland and Zach Guiser. Copeland, a 6'1", 266-pound end, had 4.5 sacks last season. Guiser was fourth on the team with 53 tackles in nine games at safety.

Akron will need some other returnees and recruits to bolster a weak rush defense that permitted 224.7 yards per game on the ground last year. The Zips also need more defensive playmakers after producing a MAC-low 16 sacks and forcing just 14 turnovers in 2016.

SPECIALISTS Akron lost a weapon in the return game in Natson, who brought a pair of punts back for touchdowns last year. Van Edwards was one of the better kickoff returners in the MAC (23.8 ypr), and is back for his junior season. Junior Tom O'Leary took advantage of his chances last season by converting 10-of-11 field goals. Junior punter Nick Gasser struggled, averaging just 37.7 yards per attempt with a net of 34.4, second lowest in the MAC.

FINAL ANALYSIS Despite Woodson's injury and their struggles defensively, the Zips were a dropped pass in the end zone away from playing in the MAC Championship Game last season. They fell 9–3 in the regular-season finale at East Division champ Ohio University with converted wide receiver Tyrell Goodman playing quarterback.

Bowden has built a program that's stable enough to survive most personnel losses, but the quarterback situation is a concern since explosiveness at that spot is so crucial in the high-scoring MAC. If Woodson can't go, Johns will likely become the man, and he joins the program with a reputation as a strong pure passer.

With Gilbert leading the way as an upperclassmen, and a well-respected coordinator calling the shots in Chuck Amato, Akron's defense will improve at least to some degree. If the signal-caller situation gets settled, the Zips could compete for the MAC East Division crown once again in 2017.



ULYSEES GILBERT

"The talent is there because (Terry) Bowden's staff really works recruiting with an SEC mindset. They've got some players."

– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	8	Kevin Gladney (Sr.)	5	Tra'Von Chapman (Sr.)
WR	82	**Austin Wolf (Sr.)**	3	Kwadarrius Smith (Jr.)
WR	11	A.J. Coney (Sr)	16	Jaquavis Dixon (So.)
LT	59	Trevor Brown (So.)	50	Undrea Bullard (Jr.)
LG	57	**Stephen Ericksen (Sr.)**	56	Brandon Council (Fr.)
C	52	**LaVonne Gauthney (Sr.)**	74	Xavier Quigley (Sr.)
RG	66	**Kyle Ritz (Jr.)**	77	Cedric McCoy (Sr.)
RT	75	**Jovann Letuli (Sr.)**	63	Nick Fazio (Jr.)
TE	10	Mykel Traylor-Bennett (Sr.)	12	Darryl Long (So.)
QB	4	**Thomas Woodson (Sr.)**	6	Nick Johns (So.)
RB	34	Warren Ball (Sr.)	7	**Van Edwards (Jr.)**

DEFENSE (4)

DE	8	**Darius Copeland (Sr.)**	52	Josh Ward (So.)
DT	50	Brock Boxen (Jr.)	97	Brennan Williams Jr. (Jr.)
DT	91	Ibrahima Camara (Sr.)	67	Tito Vazquez (Fr.)
DE	56	Deon'Tae Moore (Sr.)	94	Brian Reinke (Jr.)
OLB	4	**Ulysees Gilbert (Jr.)**	25	Travonte Junius (Jr.)
MLB	42	Andrew Hauser (Sr.)	9	Jamal Davis (Jr.)
OLB	34	DeMarcus Lloyd (Sr.)	40	John Lako (So.)
CB	7	Jordan George (Jr.)	24	Darian Dailey (Jr.)
CB	12	Kyron Brown (Jr.)	22	Mikee Hayes (Sr.)
FS	1	**Alvin Davis (So.)**	20	Shawn Featherstone (Jr.)
SS	32	**Zach Guiser (Sr.)**	31	Jamal Baggett (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	37	Tom O'Leary (Jr.)	KR	7	Van Edwards (Jr.)
P	48	Nick Gasser (Jr.)	PR	11	A.J. Coney (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Thomas Woodson, 242-146-2,079-6, 18 TDs
Rushing: Van Edwards Jr., 100 att., 492 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Austin Wolf, 36 rec., 550 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Ulysees Gilbert III, 122
Sacks: Ulysees Gilbert III, 4.0
Interceptions: Kyron Brown, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Terry Bowden
Record at School: 24-37 (5 years)
Career Record: 164-99-2 (23 years)
Offensive Coordinator: A.J. Milwee
Defensive Coordinator: Chuck Amato
Akron, OH • InfoCision Stadium (30,000)

Jeff Harwell

BOWLING GREEN FALCONS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **114** • MAC EAST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 3-5 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Michigan State
Sept.	9	South Dakota
Sept.	16	at Northwestern
Sept.	23	at Middle Tennessee
Sept.	30	Akron
Oct.	7	at Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	14	Ohio
Oct.	21	Northern Illinois
Oct.	31	at Kent State
Nov.	7	at Buffalo
Nov.	15	Toledo
Nov.	21	at Eastern Michigan

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 MAC

Sept.	3	at Ohio State	L	10-77
Sept.	10	North Dakota	W	27-26
Sept.	17	Middle Tennessee	L	21-41
Sept.	24	at Memphis	L	3-77
Oct.	1	Eastern Michigan	L	25-28
Oct.	8	at Ohio	L	24-30
Oct.	15	at Toledo	L	35-42
Oct.	22	Miami (Ohio)	L	26-40
Nov.	1	at Northern Illinois	L	20-45
Nov.	9	at Akron	W	38-28
Nov.	15	Kent State	W	42-7
Nov.	25	Buffalo	W	27-19

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Cedric Mitchell, WR, Elkhart, IN
2. Travis Koontz, TE, Youngstown, OH
3. Datrin Guyton, WR, Manor, TX*
4. Matthew Tanner, OL, Jacksonville, FL*
5. Jarret Doege, QB, Lubbock, TX
6. Jordan Murphy, DL, Columbiana, OH
7. Matt Wilcox Jr., WR, Huber Heights, OH
8. Jamari Rouse, DL, Deerfield Beach, FL
9. Andrew Clair, RB, St. Louis, MO
10. Quintin Morris, WR, Richmond, TX

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.8 ppg	9	97
Rushing	180.8 ypg	5	58
Passing	226.1 ypg	8	71
Total	406.9 ypg	6	69
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	38.3 ppg	12	118
Rushing	190.9 ypg	9	79
Passing	273.3 ypg	11	115
Total	464.3 ypg	10	113
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-16	-1.33	12	126

STAT CORNER

-1.6

BGSU averaged 5.1 yards per play in 2016 (111th in FBS); the Falcons' average fell by 1.6 yards, the steepest drop in the country.

OFFENSE After a brutal 1–8 start in 2016 that featured offensive ineptitude, the Falcons found redemption in a somewhat unfamiliar place. Bowling Green lined up and ran the football. That simple approach produced a three-game winning streak to end the season and an injection of confidence for this unit heading into 2017.

With enough punch in the running game returning, sophomore quarterback James Morgan should operate under less stress than a year ago. Morgan, who started the last seven games and passed for 2,082 yards and 16 touchdowns, should be a confident and comfortable leader. He has his top receiver, junior Scott Miller, back after Miller grabbed 74 balls for 968 yards and 10 touchdowns in 2016. Seniors Teo Redding and Hunter Folkertsma and junior Deric Phouthavong also return, and when you add explosive 6'5" transfer Datrin Guyton to the group, the picture brightens further.

Swift senior running back Josh Cleveland averaged 9.3 yards per carry over those three late wins. Bruising senior Donovan Wilson averaged 4.9 yards per carry in that span.

Some smoke and mirrors will be needed up front, where all-conference senior center Tim McAuliffe and senior left tackle Ryan Hunter are the sole starters back. The rapid maturation of the rest of that unit will be essential if the BG offense is to pick up where it left off.

DEFENSE This unit was shell-shocked in the first month of 2016, allowing an average of 55 points per game and surrendering 77 twice — to Ohio State and then Memphis. On the season, the Falcons allowed 38.3 points and 464.3 yards per game. Improvement is mandatory, and it should come in the form of a vastly improved secondary, a developing linebacker corps and a front line that should be more athletic and disruptive.

A year ago, injuries decimated the pass-coverage corps, and too many inexperienced players were tossed into the fire. This time around, juniors Robert Jackson Jr. and Clint Stephens and sophomore Cameron Jefferies have starting experience on their side at cornerback, while sophomore Jerry McBride and junior Jamari Bozeman are back with some starting time to their credit at the safety posts.

The linebacker group features juniors Brandon Harris and Dorian Hendrix and seniors Nate Locke and Nilijah Ballew. Up front, the Falcons have senior tackle Gus Schwieterman and junior end David Konowalski, who have plenty of experience, while senior Shannon Smith likely earns the start at the other tackle.

SPECIALISTS The Falcons' top pro prospect is likely 6'7" punter Joseph Davidson, who had the nation's second-best net punting average at 43.1 yards last season. Davidson had just three touchbacks in 2016 and 19 punts of 50 or more yards. Jake Suder and Nick Fields share the kicking work.

FINAL ANALYSIS Many felt that Bowling Green's brain trust really rolled the dice when the school hired Mike Jinks — with no coordinating or head coaching experience at the college level — to lead this program in 2016. But after the 1–8 start, Jinks set things straight, and BG won its final three games. Now a full season, two recruiting classes and two sessions of spring ball into this gig, Jinks and the Falcons seem quite comfortable with each other. Morgan has made seven starts at quarterback, his receiving corps is skilled and deep, and the running game is nasty again. If the offensive line develops and the defense can take a step forward, the Falcons will have an opportunity to make a move in the MAC East. But getting to six wins and bowl eligibility will be a challenge, thanks in part to a non-conference slate that includes trips to Michigan State, Northwestern and underrated Middle Tennessee.



SCOTT MILLER

"Mike Jinks gets knocked for not being an Ohio guy, but that hasn't stopped other coaches from winning big at programs like theirs."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	9	**Teo Redding (Sr.)**	89	Deric Phouthavong (Jr.)
WR	21	**Scott Miller (Jr.)**	88	**Hunter Folkertsma (Sr.)**
WR	3	Datrin Guyton (Jr.)	14	Janarvis Pough (So.)
WR	87	Marquis Zimmerman (So.)	6	Matt Wilcox (Fr.)
LT	68	**Ryan Hunter (Sr.)**	73	Joe Ware (Fr.)
LG	74	Lorenzo Taborn (So.)	76	Andrew Lucke (Jr.)
C	71	**Tim McAuliffe (Sr.)**	55	Caleb Bright (Fr.)
RG	65	Jack Kramer (So.)	78	Clark Clancy (Sr.)
RT	64	Austin Labus (Jr.)	79	Zack Sharp (Fr.)
QB	12	**James Morgan (So.)**	13	Grant Loy (Fr.)
RB	1	Josh Cleveland (Sr.)	45	Donovan Wilson (Sr.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	56	Tyrik Jones (So.)	44	Dirion Hutchins (Fr.)
DT	63	**Gus Schwieterman (Sr.)**	95	Kyle Junior (So.)
DT	93	Shannon Smith (Sr.)	54	Nico Lautanen (So.)
DE	8	**David Konowalski (Jr.)**	58	Brian Sanders (Jr.)
OLB	11	Aaron Banks (Sr.)	47	Dorian Hendrix (Jr.)
MLB	27	Nate Locke (Sr.)	28	Jerry Judd (Fr.)
OLB	19	**Brandon Harris (Jr.)**	26	Nilijah Ballew (Sr.)
CB	18	Cameron Jefferies (So.)	14	Marcus Milton (Jr.)
CB	22	Robert Jackson Jr. (Jr.)	2	Clint Stephens (Jr.)
ROV	31	Jerry McBride (So.)	4	Fred Garth (Jr.)
FS	13	**Jamari Bozeman (Jr.)**	24	**Tavaraus Wade (Sr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	46	Jake Suder (Jr.)	KR	21	Scott Miller (Jr.)
P	49	Joseph Davidson (Sr.)	PR	87	M. Zimmerman (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: James Morgan, 326-183-2,082-15, 16 TDs
Rushing: Josh Cleveland, 101 att., 649 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Scott Miller, 74 rec., 968 yds, 10 TDs
Tackles: Jamari Bozeman, 71
Sacks: Gus Schwieterman, 5.0
Interceptions: Jamari Bozeman, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Jinks
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 4-8 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinators: Kevin Kilmer, Andy Padron
Defensive Coordinator: Perry Eliano
Bowling Green, OH • Doyt Perry Stadium (24,000)

Andrew Weber/Getty Images

BUFFALO BULLS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **123** • MAC EAST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	at Minnesota
Sept. 9	at Army
Sept. 16	Colgate
Sept. 23	Florida Atlantic
Sept. 30	at Kent State
Oct. 7	Western Michigan
Oct. 14	Northern Illinois
Oct. 21	at Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 28	at Akron
Nov. 7	Bowling Green
Nov. 16	at Ball State
Nov. 24	Ohio

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 2-10, 1-7 MAC

Sept. 2	Albany	L	16-22
Sept. 17	at Nevada	L	14-38
Sept. 24	Army	(ot) W	23-20
Oct. 1	at Boston College	L	3-35
Oct. 8	Kent State	L	20-44
Oct. 15	Ball State	L	21-31
Oct. 22	at Northern Illinois	L	7-44
Oct. 27	Akron	W	41-20
Nov. 3	at Ohio	L	10-34
Nov. 12	Miami (Ohio)	L	24-35
Nov. 19	at Western Michigan	L	0-38
Nov. 25	at Bowling Green	L	19-27

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Rodney Scott, WR, Miami, FL
2. Aapri Washington, DB, Charlotte, NC
3. Rick Squires, DB, Pittsburgh, PA
4. Kyle Vantrease, QB, Stow, OH
5. Tim Terry Jr., LB, Pittsburgh, PA
6. Kobe Green, DB, Deerfield Beach, FL
7. Ja'Varius Harrison, LB, Quincy, FL
8. James Patterson, LB, Glendale, MD
9. Nikolas Ricks, LB, Akron, OH*
10. Malcolm Koonce, DL, Peekskill, NY

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	16.5 ppg	12	126
Rushing	153.3 ypg	9	90
Passing	200.5 ypg	11	95
Total	353.8 ypg	11	111
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	32.3 ppg	10	95
Rushing	253.3 ypg	12	124
Passing	181.5 ypg	1	13
Total	434.8 ypg	8	87
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-6	-0.50	9	106

STAT CORNER

17

In eight years at Wisconsin-Whitewater, Lance Leipold lost six of 115 games. In two years at Buffalo, he has lost 17 of 24 games.

OFFENSE There is nowhere to go but up for an offense that has lacked big-play ability the past two years. The best reason to expect improvement is sophomore quarterback Tyree Jackson, a 6'7", 245-pounder with a cannon arm. He can run, too, gaining 399 yards on the ground. After starting nine games as a redshirt freshman in 2016, Jackson looks poised for a breakthrough.

The offensive line should be better. Impressive Rutgers transfer Jacquis Webb takes over the left tackle job. Quality center James O'Hagan anchors a more experienced middle three. Grambling transfer Paul Nosworthy adds quality depth, at the least.

UB has been recruiting well-regarded running backs for several years now, so there is no panic over replacing stellar Jordan Johnson. Johnathan Hawkins, Theo Anderson and Kamerion Pickett should rack up yards.

The big question mark is wide receiver. The leading returnee, Kamathi Holsey, had only 19 catches. UB tied for 10th in the MAC in pass plays of 20-plus yards two years ago and tied for eighth last year. Defenses have squatted on the passing game for too long. Maybe talented junior college transfer Anthony Johnson can break out after sitting last season. Ditto for youngsters K.J. Osborn and Antonio Nunn. Jacob Martinez and Jamarl Eiland have ability in the slot, but UB hasn't used slot wideouts well the past two years. The coaches must do a better job establishing an offensive identity.

DEFENSE The good news for the UB defense that is eight starters return. But the Bulls need several of them to take leaps forward in performance, because the team ranked 10th in the MAC in points allowed and 124th in the nation in run defense. Of course, a little more support from the offense would help. UB faced the fourth-most rushing attempts in the country.

Khalil Hodge, a second-team All-MAC performer, is an asset at middle linebacker. Chris Ford and Justin Brandon should form a capable defensive tackle combination. Ends Demone Harris and Charles Harris (no relation) need to make more noise, and the Bulls need a young player to become a situational edge rusher. The hope is Jordan Collier and some speedy backups add more range on the field side at outside linebacker. UB gave up 10 runs of 40-plus yards (only eight teams allowed more). The Bulls weren't assignment sound against QB option runs, either.

UB has been accumulating young talent at cornerback, starting with capable Cameron Lewis. Consistency at safety has been a problem. Ryan Williamson and Tim Roberts both like to hit. The Bulls need another player to step into the safety rotation.

SPECIALISTS Lack of depth at linebacker has hindered the Bulls' special teams in recent years. UB is confident it has more contributors at the position, which should help. Placekicker Adam Mitcheson has two seasons of experience and should be ready for a strong junior season. The punting duties will be decided between Kyle DeWeen, who won the job as a walk-on last year, and sophomore Taylor Sheets.

FINAL ANALYSIS The 2016 season was a reality check for the program. Coach Lance Leipold added some much-needed speed the past two years, but it will take time for the youth to develop. Strength coach Ryan Cidzik is in only his second year. Good player development is critical for the Bulls, who aren't in a position to recruit more polished products than the MAC powers. More patience is required for a program that has had just two winning seasons in 18 years at the FBS level. If Jackson can make good progress this season, the future will look a lot brighter.



KHALIL HODGE

"Buffalo is a very hard job, and the recruiting is outside the usual paths in the league because of the location."

– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	83	Anthony Johnson (Jr.)	16	Antonio Nunn (Fr.)	
WR	15	Jamarl Eiland (Sr.)	88	Jacob Martinez (Sr.)	
WR	86	**Kamathi Holsey (Sr.)**	8	K.J. Osborn (So.)	
LT	76	Jacquis Webb (Jr.)	72	Paul Nosworthy (So.)	
LG	61	**Brandon Manosalvas (Sr.)**	74	Connor Morehart (Jr.)	
C	77	**James O'Hagan (Jr.)**	64	Michael Kenefick (So.)	
RG	65	**Tomas Jack-Kurdyla (So.)**	54	Skylar Hartley (Jr.)	
RT	70	**David Goldsby (Sr.)**	67	Evin Ksiezarczyk (So.)	
TE	81	Tyler Mabry (So.)	84	Andrew Gray (Jr.)	
QB	3	**Tyree Jackson (So.)**	12	Drew Anderson (Jr.)	
RB	24	Johnathan Hawkins (Jr.)	11	Theo Anderson (Fr.)	

DEFENSE (8)

DE	91	**Demone Harris (Sr.)**	94	Myles Nicholas (Jr.)
DT	58	**Chris Ford (Sr.)**	95	Jake Khoury (Jr.)
DT	90	Justin Brandon (Jr.)	96	Duke Hwang (So.)
DE	92	Charles Harris (Jr.)	98	Wesley Scott (Jr.)
OLB	36	**Jarrett Franklin (Sr.)**	16	**Ishmael Hargrove (Sr.)**
MLB	4	**Khalil Hodge (Jr.)**	42	Matt Otwinowski (So.)
OLB	25	Jordan Collier (Jr.)	23	Nikolas Ricks (So.)
CB	39	**Cameron Lewis (Jr.)**	9	Tatum Slack (Jr.)
CB	14	Brandon Williams (Jr.)	18	Roy Baker (Fr.)
S	22	**Tim Roberts (Sr.)**	28	Dev Lamour (So.)
S	26	**Ryan Williamson (Sr.)**	6	Jeremiah Dadeboe (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	19	Adam Mitcheson (Jr.)	KR	29	Emmanuel Reed (So.)
P	30	Kyle DeWeen (Sr.)	PR	88	Jacob Martinez (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tyree Jackson, 311-165-1,772-9, 9 TDs
Rushing: Tyree Jackson, 99 att., 399 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Johnathan Hawkins, 21 rec., 119 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Khalil Hodge, 123
Sacks: Demone Harris, 3.0
Interceptions: Tim Roberts, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Lance Leipold
Record at School: 7-17 (2 years)
Career Record: 116-23 (10 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Andy Kotelnicki
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Borland
Buffalo, NY • UB Stadium (29,013)

Paul Hokanson/UBBulls.com

KENT STATE GOLDEN FLASHES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **127** • MAC EAST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Clemson
Sept.	9	Howard
Sept.	16	at Marshall
Sept.	23	at Louisville
Sept.	30	Buffalo
Oct.	7	at Northern Illinois
Oct.	14	Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	21	at Ohio
Oct.	31	Bowling Green
Nov.	8	at Western Michigan
Nov.	14	Central Michigan
Nov.	21	at Akron

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 MAC

Sept.	3	at Penn State	L	13-33
Sept.	10	North Carolina A&T (ot)	L	36-39
Sept.	17	Monmouth	W	27-7
Sept.	24	at Alabama	L	0-48
Oct.	1	Akron	L	27-31
Oct.	8	at Buffalo	W	44-20
Oct.	15	at Miami (Ohio)	L	14-18
Oct.	22	Ohio	L	10-14
Oct.	29	at Central Michigan	W	27-24
Nov.	8	Western Michigan	L	21-37
Nov.	15	at Bowling Green	L	7-42
Nov.	25	Northern Illinois	L	21-31

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Eddie Brecht, OL, Lapeer, MI
2. Elvis Hines, CB, Camden, NJ
3. Dustin Crum, QB, Grafton, OH
4. Jonathan Moore, WR, Fort Lauderdale, FL
5. Rodley Jolicoeur, S, Delray Beach, FL
6. Isaac Vance, RB, Las Cruces, NM
7. Kesean Gamble, LB, Cincinnati, OH
8. Will Phillis III, QB, Hilliard, OH
9. Cepeda Phillips, LB, Detroit, MI
10. Amari Jenson, LB, Ypsilanti, MI

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.6 ppg	11	117
Rushing	167.5 ypg	7	76
Passing	141.7 ypg	12	121
Total	309.2 ypg	12	125
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.7 ppg	5	67
Rushing	189.8 ypg	8	76
Passing	196.8 ypg	2	22
Total	386.5 ypg	4	50
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.92	2	8

STAT CORNER

4.7

Kent averaged just 4.7 yards per play on first down, 125th in FBS. First down completion percentage: a hopeless 45 percent.

OFFENSE Nick Holley moved from the slot to quarterback in last year's conference opener and breathed instant life into a struggling offense that finished dead last in the nation in points scored in 2015. The dual-threat signal caller threw for 868 yards and rushed for 873 in seven starts before suffering a knee injury in Week 11. He did not participate in spring drills but is expected to be at full strength for preseason practices.

Holley averaged 49 plays from scrimmage in his first six starts, which took a toll on his 5'10", 200-pound frame. The Flashes will look to ease the burden on him in 2017 by spreading the ball around. Tailback Justin Rankin rushed for 511 yards as a freshman despite battling through some injuries, and he also led the team in catches (28) and receiving yards (335). Sophomore Will Matthews, junior Myles Washington and redshirt freshman Keon Singleton provide excellent depth at running back.

Senior wide receiver Kris White is back after suffering a season-ending leg injury in last year's opener, while Kent State is also expecting junior college transfer wideout Donte Ross to make an instant impact.

The Flashes have moved their top returning lineman, junior Stefano Millin, from center to left tackle as they look to become a more physical, run-oriented team with Holley at quarterback. Nathan Puthoff, the lone senior on the starting unit, will take over at center, while 300-pound former standout wrestler Adam Gregoire will slide into the right tackle slot as a sophomore.

DEFENSE Kent State's defense wasn't dominant last year, but it consistently kept the team in games against MAC competition. Six of the top seven tacklers from last season have moved on, but eight players who started the final game of 2016 return.

The unit was especially adept against the pass, allowing under 200 yards per game through the air, and has a pair of former All-MAC cornerbacks returning in seniors Jerrell Foster and Demetrius Monday. The Flashes have to replace one of the top safeties in the conference the past three years in Nate Holley — the twin brother of the QB — but junior Juantez McRae has shown playmaking ability. McRae is the team's top returning tackler (59).

The front seven features senior strongman Jon Cunningham, a 300-pound All-MAC tackle who bench presses 450 pounds and squats 700. Senior Marques Moore will slide into the rush end position in place of Terence Waugh, who posted 15 tackles for a loss and eight sacks as a senior. Junior Jim Jones and senior James Alexander gained valuable experience at linebacker in the past but will be expected to ratchet up their production considerably in 2017.

SPECIALISTS Shane Hynes returns for his junior season after hitting 15-of-22 field goals last fall. Derek Adams punted well as a true freshman, averaging 40.3 yards per attempt, but will look to hit the ball consistently longer as a sophomore.

FINAL ANALYSIS Paul Haynes is in the final year of his five-year contract and has yet to win more than four games in a season. Last year's squad was much more consistently competitive in MAC play but still finished just 3–9 after losing three conference games by four points. With Holley at quarterback for a full season and more help in place at the skill positions, the Flashes will finally enter a season sporting an offense that strikes some semblance of fear into opposing defenses. Haynes' teams have always been solid defensively, so offensive production remains the key to overall success. Kent State must also survive a brutal non-conference schedule that features road trips to Clemson, Louisville and Marshall.



NICK HOLLEY

"They're going to need a miracle for Paul Haynes to keep his job. ... The problems go deeper than changing a coaching staff."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)				
WR	3	Kris White (Sr.)		Donte Ross (Jr.)
WR	80	Johnny Woods (Jr.)	15	Trey Harrell (So.)
SL	24	**Raekwon James (Jr.)**	84	Kavious Price (So.)
LT	54	**Stefano Millin (Jr.)**	64	Bryce Gibbs (So.)
LG	68	Mike Marinelli (So.)	47	Davonte James (Jr.)
C	52	Nathan Puthoff (Sr.)	76	Chase Van Hoef (So.)
RG	59	**Connor Shinsky (Jr.)**	78	Zach Corrigall (Fr.)
RT	75	Adam Gregoire (So.)		Eddie Brecht (Fr.)
TE	82	**Ryan Malone (Sr.)**	8	Chalftonte Butler (So.)
QB	4	**Nick Holley (Sr.)**	17	Mylik Mitchell (So.)
RB	11	**Justin Rankin (So.)**	21	Will Matthews (So.)
DEFENSE (5)				
DE	58	**Theo Eboigbe (Jr.)**	33	Matt Sommers (Sr.)
DT	49	Kalil Morris (Jr.)	92	Theo Majette (So.)
DT	90	**Jon Cunningham (Sr.)**	98	Dominic Hill (So.)
DE	45	Marques Moore (Sr.)	41	Nick Faulkner (So.)
OLB	22	Jim Jones (Jr.)	29	Matt Bahr (Jr.)
MLB	5	**James Alexander (Sr.)**	32	Dalton Hicks (So.)
STAR	31	Akeam Peters (So.)	38	Jae'Vante Ray (Jr.)
CB	21	Demetrius Monday (Sr.)	19	Jamal Parker (So.)
CB	23	**Jerrell Foster (Sr.)**	30	Darryl Marshall (Jr.)
FS	20	Marcus Elliott (Sr.)	10	Quan Robinson Jr. (Jr.)
SS	1	**Juantez McRae (Jr.)**	2	Erik Simpson (Jr.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K	57	Shane Hynes (Jr.)	KR	24 Raekwon James (Jr.)
P	96	Derek Adams (So.)	PR	86 Zaquon Tyson (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nick Holley, 146-72-868-3, 4 TDs
Rushing: Nick Holley, 195 att., 920 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Justin Rankin, 28 rec., 335 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Juantez McRae, 59
Sacks: Five players tied with 1.0
Interceptions: Jerrell Foster, 3; Jamal Parker, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Paul Haynes
Record at School: 12–35 (4 years)
Career Record: 12–35 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Don Treadwell
Defensive Coordinator: Ben Needham
Kent, OH • Dix Stadium (25,319)

Kent State University Athletic Communications

MIAMI REDHAWKS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **78** • MAC EAST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-5, 6-2 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Marshall
Sept.	9	Austin Peay
Sept.	16	Cincinnati
Sept.	23	at Central Michigan
Sept.	30	at Notre Dame
Oct.	7	Bowling Green
Oct.	14	at Kent State
Oct.	21	Buffalo
Oct.	31	at Ohio
Nov.	7	Akron
Nov.	15	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	21	at Ball State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 6-2 MAC

Sept.	3	at Iowa	L	21-45
Sept.	10	Eastern Illinois	L	17-21
Sept.	17	Western Kentucky	L	24-31
Sept.	24	at Cincinnati	L	20-27
Oct.	1	Ohio	L	7-17
Oct.	8	at Akron	L	13-35
Oct.	15	Kent State	W	18-14
Oct.	22	at Bowling Green	W	40-26
Oct.	29	at Eastern Michigan	W	28-15
Nov.	4	Central Michigan	W	37-17
Nov.	12	at Buffalo	W	35-24
Nov.	22	Ball State	W	21-20
Dec.	26	vs. Mississippi State #	L	16-17

#St. Petersburg Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Josh Maize, DE, Deerfield, IL
2. Mitchell Lewis, WR, Lisle, IL
3. Davion Johnson, RB, Pontiac, MI
4. Peter Nank, OL, West Des Moines, IA
5. Mitchell Burton, RB, Columbus, IN
6. David Redding, OL, Columbus, IN
7. Jalen Walker, WR, Carmel, IN
8. Jackson Williamson, QB, Anderson, SC
9. Elijah Watson, DL, Hackensack, NJ
10. Donte Taylor Jr., DB, Akron, OH

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.8 ppg	10	114
Rushing	136.3 ypg	10	107
Passing	230.6 ypg	6	65
Total	366.9 ypg	10	104
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	23.8 ppg	3	31
Rushing	144.4 ypg	2	37
Passing	208.8 ypg	4	40
Total	353.2 ypg	1	25
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	3	58

STAT CORNER

-3.9

Miami's field position margin was minus-3.9 yards per drive (112th in FBS). And yet the RedHawks still turned their season around.

OFFENSE After seeing what the RedHawks looked like with Gus Ragland at quarterback for the last six games of the 2016 season, Miami fans can't wait to get a full season from the junior in 2017. Ragland was the surprise starter in Game 7 after an 0–6 start and sparked a historic six-game winning streak that led to a berth in the St. Petersburg Bowl. Miami's average points-per-game leaped from 17.0 during the losing streak to 29.8 during the winning streak. What was most impressive about Ragland was his efficiency — 17 touchdowns and just one interception in 179 throws.

Ragland is one of eight returning offensive starters, including leading rusher Alonzo Smith, wide receivers James Gardner and Jared Murphy, tight end Ryan Smith and four offensive linemen. Left guard Jordan Diamond, a transfer from Auburn who was granted a sixth season of eligibility, is the team's top offensive lineman. Smith started in place of Nate Becker, who was expected to be the first-team tight end before suffering a season-ending injury.

DEFENSE Eight starters return from one of the top defenses in the MAC. In conference games, the RedHawks allowed a league-low 334.0 yards per game, including only 125.4 on the ground.

Linebackers Junior McMullen and De'Andre Montgomery both earned all-conference honors, while former walk-on Brad Koenig finished with 73 tackles, including 8.5 for a loss. Montgomery has a nose for the ball, recording four interceptions on the season and scoring two touchdowns against Buffalo.

Koenig's penetration skills could help make up for the loss to graduation of defensive ends Austin Gearing and J.T. Jones, who combined for 10.5 of Miami's 24 sacks last season. Returning tackles Nate Trawick and Ikeem Allen combined for 3.5 sacks.

First-team All-MAC pick Heath Harding teams up with Deondre Daniels to form perhaps the conference's best cornerback tandem, and safety Tony Reid led the RedHawks last season with 98 tackles. Josh Allen started seven games at the other safety position.

SPECIALISTS Nick Dowd missed five extra points last season, which could be crucial if the RedHawks play as many close games in 2017 as they did in 2016 (six games decided by one score). Kyle Kramer took over the punting duties midway through the season and averaged 41.7 yards while placing 14 of his 30 kicks inside the 20-yard line. Maurice Thomas was named third-team All-MAC after averaging 24.6 yards per kickoff return, including a 94-yard burst against archrival Cincinnati.

FINAL ANALYSIS Fourth-year coach Chuck Martin has the RedHawks on the right track. They closed 2016 with a rush — since the NCAA allowed teams to start playing 12 games in 2006, no team had ever finished 6–6 after starting 0–6, and their 17–16 bowl loss to Mississippi State almost felt like a win. They won't be sneaking up on opponents next season, but they seem to have the experience to handle the spotlight.

Indeed, the entire program is experiencing a renaissance. In February, Miami opened a new 56,000 square-foot Athletic Performance Center, including a plush 6,000 square-foot locker room, an 8,200 square-foot weight room, a 5,000 square-foot athletic training and rehabilitation area and a 1,400 square-foot players' lounge. It's connected to the newish indoor practice facility, and both will help with recruiting while enhancing the RedHawks' on-field performance.

There's no reason to believe Miami will regress. With 16 starters returning, the future looks bright as the RedHawks try to restore the luster to a program that once was the pride of the MAC.



TONY REID

"They're going to be stronger this year, and it looked good for the conference when they almost beat Mississippi State. This is a talented team."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	83	Sam Martin (Sr.)	8	Jack Sorensen (So.)
WR	81	**James Gardner (Jr.)**	86	Luke Mayock (So.)
WR	88	**Jared Murphy (Sr.)**	13	Kyle Row (Jr.)
LT	52	**Jordan Rigg (Jr.)**	77	Matt Skibinski (So.)
LG	67	**Jordan Diamond (Sr.)**	50	Ryan Mullen (Jr.)
C	51	**Danny Godlevske (So.)**	56	Mitch Palmer (Jr.)
RG	66	**Sam McCollum (Jr.)**	70	Trent Maynard (So.)
RT	75	Jarrett LaRubbio (Sr.)	76	Randy Heideman (Sr.)
TE	44	Nate Becker (Jr.)	82	**Ryan Smith (Sr.)**
QB	14	**Gus Ragland (Jr.)**	5	Billy Bahl (Jr.)
RB	26	**Alonzo Smith (Jr.)**	3	Kenny Young (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	92	Quinn Calcagno (Jr.)	90	Dean Lemon (Jr.)
DT	55	**Ikeem Allen (Sr.)**	69	AJ Burdine (Sr.)
DT	96	**Nate Trawick (Jr.)**	58	Doug Costin (So.)
DE	95	Ben Kimpler (So.)	9	Brad Earnest (Jr.)
OLB	38	Brad Koenig (Jr.)	39	Nigel Adams (So.)
MLB	5	**Junior McMullen (Jr.)**	48	Sam Connolly (Jr.)
OLB	21	**De'Andre Montgomery (Jr.)**	52	Cam Turner (So.)
CB	24	**Heath Harding (Sr.)**	1	Cedric Asseh (So.)
CB	15	**Deondre Daniels (Jr.)**	4	Allan Koikoi (Jr.)
S	14	**Tony Reid (Sr.)**	27	Kobe Burse (So.)
S	2	**Joshua Allen (Jr.)**	8	Daryus Thompson (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	97	Nick Dowd (Jr.)	KR	31	Maurice Thomas (Jr.)
P	9	Kyle Kramer (So.)	PR	88	Jared Murphy (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Gus Ragland, 179-115-1,537-1, 17 TDs
Rushing: Alonzo Smith, 163 att., 709 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: James Gardner, 45 rec., 750 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Tony Reid, 98
Sacks: Three players tied with 3.0
Interceptions: Heath Harding, 4; De'Andre Montgomery, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Chuck Martin
Record at School: 11-26 (3 years)
Career Record: 85-33 (9 years)
Co-Offensive Coordinators: George Barnett, Eric Koehler
Co-Defensive Coordinators: John Hauser, Matt Pawlowski
Oxford, OH • Yager Stadium (24,286)

Miami Athletics

OHIO BOBCATS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **85** • MAC EAST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Hampton
Sept.	8	at Purdue
Sept.	16	Kansas
Sept.	23	at Eastern Michigan
Sept.	30	at Massachusetts
Oct.	7	Central Michigan
Oct.	14	at Bowling Green
Oct.	21	Kent State
Oct.	31	Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	8	Toledo
Nov.	14	at Akron
Nov.	24	at Buffalo

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-6, 6-2 MAC

Sept.	3	Texas State	(ot) L	54-56
Sept.	10	at Kansas	W	37-21
Sept.	17	at Tennessee	L	19-28
Sept.	24	Gardner-Webb	W	37-21
Oct.	1	at Miami (Ohio)	W	17-7
Oct.	8	Bowling Green	W	30-24
Oct.	15	Eastern Michigan	L	20-27
Oct.	22	at Kent State	W	14-10
Oct.	27	at Toledo	W	31-26
Nov.	3	Buffalo	W	34-10
Nov.	15	at Central Michigan	L	20-27
Nov.	22	Akron	W	9-3
Dec.	2	vs. Western Michigan #	L	23-29
Dec.	23	vs. Troy %	L	23-28

#Detroit %Dollar General Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Brevin Harris, WR, Creston, OH
2. De'Vante Mitchell, DB, Hialeah, FL
3. T.J. Robinson, LB, Jacksonville, FL
4. Brett Kitrell, OL, Ashland, NE
5. Marcus Coleman, DE, Upper Marlboro, MD
6. Jylton Tusha, OL, Jacksonville, FL
7. Marlin Brooks, DB, Miami, FL
8. Drew Keszei, QB, Fort Wayne, IN
9. K.J. Minter, ATH, Gainesville, FL
10. Willie Cherry, WR, Wichita Falls, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.3 ppg	8	85
Rushing	167.9 ypg	6	75
Passing	224.4 ypg	9	72
Total	392.3 ypg	7	77
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.6 ppg	2	26
Rushing	104.4 ypg	1	5
Passing	255.8 ypg	9	102
Total	360.2 ypg	3	27
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.07	5	64

STAT CORNER

4.9

In their first 10 games, the Bobcats averaged 5.7 yards per play. In the last four, following QB Greg Windham's injury, they averaged 4.9.

OFFENSE Sophomore quarterback Quinton Maxwell started seven of Ohio's last eight games in 2016, but he was inconsistent. He'll start 2017 as the No. 1 option with good reason, though. He has experience, good size, a strong enough arm and is a strong runner. But he'll be pushed by junior college transfer Nathan Rourke, who arrived in time for spring camp and still has three seasons of eligibility. Inconsistency can't be tolerated for an offense that needs to improve.

The Bobcats' biggest weakness will be a lack of proven playmakers down the field. Three of the team's top four receiving options are gone, including big-time producers Jordan Reid and Sebastian Smith, who combined for 113 receptions, 10 touchdowns and 1,555 yards last season. If Ohio is to improve on its mediocre offense, then the team's young group of wideouts — headed up by converted running back Papi White — will have to develop. Sophomore Elijah Ball and redshirt freshman Cam Odom are the next logical choices to be difference makers.

Ohio has a solid group up front. The Bobcats return three starters on the offensive line, with returning All-MAC pick Jake Pruehs at center.

The ground game could carry Ohio. Junior running back A.J. Ouellette missed all but four plays last season after a Lisfranc injury, but he led the team in rushing in 2014 and '15. Senior Dorian Brown (825 yards in 2016) had a breakthrough 2016 campaign, and junior Maleek Irons returns as well.

DEFENSE The Bobcats leaned on a fearsome front seven last year to help cover up a young secondary. Ohio was a top-five defense against the run and piled up a program-record 44 sacks but will have to rework a unit that lost four starters in the front seven — most notably MAC Defensive Player of the Year Tarell Basham at defensive end.

Ohio could still be stout up front. The Bobcats will likely have seven seniors in the front seven, including returning standout linebackers Quentin Poling and Chad Moore.

And while Ohio won't have a player of Basham's caliber on the defensive line, the unit hopes the depth it created last year will pay off. Nose tackle Cleon Aloese is a good run stuffer up the middle, and end Kevin Robbins is poised to be the team's new sack leader.

The young secondary of a year ago is more seasoned and should be improved. The Bobcats return five players who started games at cornerback last season. At safety, sophomore Javon Hagan is poised to become one of the MAC's best.

SPECIALISTS Ohio had questions on special teams going into last season but won't have any for the foreseeable future. Returning sophomores Michael Farkas (punter) and Louie Zervos (placekicker) far exceeded expectations. Farkas had only three of his 71 punts result in touchbacks and had 30 downed inside the 20. Zervos set a program record with 29 made field goals and was a solid 7-of-10 on kicks from beyond 40 yards.

FINAL ANALYSIS Ohio will be in the mix again for a MAC East title and a bowl bid. That's been the case for much of Frank Solich's 12-year tenure. The defense will be competitive and should keep the Bobcats in most games. The run game should be more effective with better injury luck in the backfield compared to last season. But for Ohio to take another step — challenge for 10 wins, be a favorite to win the MAC Championship Game — it will have to figure out a way to juice up an offense that hasn't been among the MAC's top three in the past decade. With young quarterbacks and unproven receivers, it'll be a tough task.



QUENTIN POLING

"Frank Solich doesn't get the respect he deserves for how consistent that program is. Longevity isn't rewarded in the MAC."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	8	Elijah Ball (So.)	3	Cam Odom (Fr.)	
WR	4	**Papi White (Jr.)**	80	Jerrid Marhefka (Sr.)	
WR	85	Brendan Cope (Sr.)	17	Tim Helton (Sr.)	
LT	65	**Joe Lowery (Jr.)**	55	Taeshon Trotter (Fr.)	
LG	63	Joe Anderson (Jr.)	70	Nick Sink (Fr.)	
C	52	**Jake Pruehs (Sr.)**	77	Adam Notestine (Fr.)	
RG	57	**Durrell Wood (Sr.)**	53	Marques Grimes (So.)	
RT	74	Jared McCray (Sr.)	79	Kyle Kuhar (Jr.)	
TE	82	**Troy Mangen (Sr.)**	86	Mason Morgan (Sr.)	
QB	7	Quinton Maxwell (So.)	12	Nathan Rourke (So.)	
RB	45	A.J. Ouellette (Jr.)	**28**	**Dorian Brown (Sr.)**	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	90	Trent Smart (Sr.)	91	Sam McKnight (So.)
DT	54	Tony Porter (Sr.)	97	Kent Berger (Jr.)
NT	92	**Cleon Aloese (Sr.)**	66	Brian Arp (So.)
DE	96	Kevin Robbins (Sr.)	51	Will Evans (Fr.)
LB	38	**Chad Moore (Sr.)**	35	Dylan Conner (Fr.)
LB	32	**Quentin Poling (Sr.)**	40	Cody Grilliot (Sr.)
LB	47	Evan Croutch (Jr.)	15	Marcus Brunson (So.)
CB	23	**Kylan Nelson (Jr.)**	21	Jalen Fox (Jr.)
CB	3	Bradd Ellis (Sr.)	2	Mayne Williams (So.)
S	7	**Javon Hagan (So.)**	28	Jeff Christian (Jr.)
S	31	Grant Cunningham (Sr.)	25	Tyler Gullett (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	48	Louis Zervos (So.)	KR	28	Dorian Brown (Sr.)
P	89	Michael Farkas (So.)	PR	4	Papi White (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Quinton Maxwell, 161-89-1,247-4, 8 TDs
Rushing: Dorian Brown, 158 att., 825 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Papi White, 41 rec., 672 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Quentin Poling, 110
Sacks: Quentin Poling, 4.0
Interceptions: Javon Hagan, 3; Kylan Nelson, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Frank Solich
Record at School: 88-67 (12 years)
Career Record: 146-86 (18 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Tim Albin, Scott Isphording
Defensive Coordinator: Jimmy Burrow
Athens, OH • Peden Stadium (24,000)

Daniel Kubus/Ohio Athletics

BALL STATE CARDINALS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **116** • MAC WEST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 2-6 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Illinois
Sept.	9	UAB
Sept.	16	Tennessee Tech
Sept.	23	at Western Kentucky
Sept.	30	at Western Michigan
Oct.	7	at Akron
Oct.	21	Central Michigan
Oct.	26	Toledo
Nov.	2	at Eastern Michigan
Nov.	9	at Northern Illinois
Nov.	16	Buffalo
Nov.	21	Miami (Ohio)

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 1-7 MAC

Sept.	2	at Georgia State	W	31-21
Sept.	10	at Indiana	L	20-30
Sept.	17	Eastern Kentucky	W	41-14
Sept.	24	at Florida Atlantic	W	31-27
Oct.	1	Northern Illinois	L	24-31
Oct.	8	at Central Michigan	L	21-24
Oct.	15	at Buffalo	W	31-21
Oct.	22	Akron	L	25-35
Nov.	1	Western Michigan	L	20-52
Nov.	8	Eastern Michigan	L	41-48
Nov.	16	at Toledo	L	19-37
Nov.	22	at Miami (Ohio)	L	20-21

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Khalil Newton, WR, Lithonia, GA
2. Justin Gibbs, WR, Grovetown, GA
3. Curtis Blackwell, OL, Uniondale, IN
4. Caleb Huntley, RB, Locust Grove, GA
5. Kevin Dominique, RB, White Castle, LA
6. Demetrius Murray, S, Lawrenceville, GA
7. Justin Hall, WR, Douglasville, GA
8. Shahid Reece, LB, New Orleans, LA
9. Brock Burns, LB, Fishers, IN
10. Jimmy Daw, LB, Medina, OH

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.0 ppg	6	75
Rushing	220.0 ypg	3	30
Passing	229.2 ypg	7	66
Total	449.2 ypg	5	37
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.1 ppg	7	78
Rushing	150.6 ypg	3	47
Passing	319.7 ypg	12	126
Total	470.3 ypg	12	116
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-10	-0.83	11	120

STAT CORNER

14.1

BSU got stuffed at or behind the line on 14.1% of rushes, eighth in FBS. Avoid moving backwards, and you avoid third-and-long.

OFFENSE For the two seasons prior to his arrival at Ball State, Mike Neu coached Saints quarterback Drew Brees. Neu admits that his experiences with the 10-time Pro Bowler might have influenced him to set unrealistic standards for Cardinals quarterback Riley Neal. Neal completed 61.4 percent of his passes last year, but his 13-to-12 TD-to-INT ratio wasn't quite what Neu hoped. "My expectation level was probably a little bit unfair," Neu says. "He was dealing with a coaching change and a new offense and he was a true sophomore. … He was in some critical situations that he will learn from. He's come such a long way. I expect him to make huge improvement."

Neal missed spring ball after undergoing surgery on his non-throwing shoulder. He settled for mental reps when he could have used some pitch-and-catch time with Ball State's revamped receiving corps, which lost all-time receptions leader KeVonn Mabon to graduation and superb freshman Damon Hazelton Jr. to transfer. Slot man Corey Lacanaria (33 catches, two TDs) is the top returning target, so there's room for a trio of three-star recruits from Georgia — Khalil Newton, Justin Gibbs and Justin Hall — to make an immediate impact.

The passing game will have some time to mature, because the running game ranks among the MAC's finest. James Gilbert earned first-team all-league honors after piling up 1,332 yards and 12 TDs, and he'll get to run behind three linemen who started all 12 games last year — senior center-turned-left guard Vinnie Palazeti, senior right guard Pat Maloney and junior left guard-turned-right tackle Alex Joss — along with part-time starter Kadin Booker.

DEFENSE Defensive coordinator Tim Daoust moved to Western Michigan in the offseason, so Neu used the opportunity to hire former Western Kentucky head coach David Elson to take over Ball State's 4-3 scheme. Elson's primary priority? Force more turnovers. The Cardinals managed just seven interceptions and seven fumble recoveries in 2016. "Every practice we have, it's an emphasis," Neu says.

Ball State welcomes back just four starters from last year's crew that ranked last among MAC teams in yards allowed (470.3 ypg) and tied for ninth in turnovers forced (14). The Cardinals' strength is along the line of scrimmage, where third-team All-MAC defensive end Anthony Winbush added 20 pounds with plans to add to last year's 8.5 sacks. Veteran tackle Kevin Willis contributed two sacks.

The secondary features cornerbacks Marc Walton, who picked off three passes and broke up 11 others, and David Moore (10 pass breakups). "We're going to expand on last year's scheme and mix it up more on the back end with our coverages," Neu says.

Ball State lost all three of its linebackers to graduation, including third-team all-league pick Sean Wiggins. Though the unit is short on experience, Neu asserts that junior weak-side backer Damon Singleton and sophomore middle linebacker Jacob White have paid their dues and are ready to play.

SPECIALISTS Junior Morgan Hagee has been virtually automatic inside 40 yards (26-of-28), but his career long is a 45-yarder. He could pull double duty as the punter, although the Cards are hopeful that incoming freshman Nathan Snyder can handle the gig. More newcomers could factor in the kick returner competition. Lacanaria has experience as the punt returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS Ball State boasts just 12 seniors, so the Cardinals need help from Neu's first two recruiting classes. In particular, the highly touted class of 2017 will have to make an immediate contribution if Ball State is to make a move in the MAC West.



JAMES GILBERT

"They don't have that explosive player you build an offense around. Defensively, they can be pushed around a lot."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	19	Devin Reece (Jr.)		Khalil Newton (Fr.)
WR	1	Jordan Hogue (Sr.)		Justin Gibbs (Fr.)
SLOT	11	Corey Lacanaria (Sr.)		Justin Hall (Fr.)
LT	58	Kadin Booker (Jr.)	57	Jake McKenzie (Fr.)
LG	**75**	**Vinnie Palazeti (Sr.)**	72	Anthony Todd (Fr.)
C	64	Andrew Poenitsch (So.)	54	Chris Beech (Fr.)
RG	**73**	**Pat Maloney (Sr.)**	71	Zac Ricketts (So.)
RT	**70**	**Alex Joss (Jr.)**	77	Kaleb Slaven (Fr.)
TE	84	Danny Pinter (So.)	88	Nolan Givan (Fr.)
QB	**15**	**Riley Neal (Jr.)**	14	Jack Milas (Sr.)
TB	**34**	**James Gilbert (Jr.)**	25	Darian Green (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)

RE	**98**	**Anthony Winbush (Sr.)**	35	James Jennette III (Fr.)
DT	**93**	**Kevin Willis (Sr.)**	52	Fred Schroeder (Jr.)
NT	42	Chris Crumb (So.)	92	John Swisher (Sr.)
DE	95	Brian Whitaker (Sr.)	94	Frank Burton (Fr.)
SLB	26	Brandon Martin (Fr.)		Brock Burns (Fr.)
MLB	36	Jacob White (So.)	32	Jeremiah Jackson (Jr.)
WLB	50	Damon Singleton (Jr.)	48	Jaylin Thomas (Fr.)
CB	**23**	**Marc Walton (Jr.)**	**13**	**David Moore (Sr.)**
CB	11	Josh Miller (Jr.)	20	Deion Hallmon (Jr.)
FS	31	Romero Wade (So.)	10	Lamar Anderson (So.)
SS	28	Armani McNulty (Jr.)	29	Mitch Larsen (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	22	Morgan Hagee (Jr.)	KR	21	Malik Dunner (So.)
P		Nathan Snyder (Fr.)	PR	11	Corey Lacanaria (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Riley Neal, 394-242-2,541-12, 13 TDs
Rushing: James Gilbert, 251 att., 1,332 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Corey Lacanaria, 33 rec., 341 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Marc Walton, 63
Sacks: Anthony Winbush, 8.5
Interceptions: Marc Walton, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Neu
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 4-8 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Joey Lynch
Defensive Coordinator: David Elson
Muncie, IN • Scheumann Stadium (22,500)

Justin Casterline

CENTRAL MICHIGAN CHIPPEWAS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **106** • MAC WEST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 4-4 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	Rhode Island
Sept. 9	at Kansas
Sept. 16	at Syracuse
Sept. 23	Miami (Ohio)
Sept. 30	at Boston College
Oct. 7	at Ohio
Oct. 14	Toledo
Oct. 21	at Ball State
Nov. 1	at Western Michigan
Nov. 8	Eastern Michigan
Nov. 14	at Kent State
Nov. 24	Northern Illinois

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 MAC

Sept. 1	Presbyterian	W	49-3
Sept. 10	at Oklahoma State	W	30-27
Sept. 17	UNLV	W	44-21
Sept. 24	at Virginia	L	35-49
Oct. 1	Western Michigan	L	10-49
Oct. 8	Ball State	W	24-21
Oct. 15	at No. Illinois (ot)	W	34-28
Oct. 22	at Toledo	L	17-31
Oct. 29	Kent State	L	24-27
Nov. 4	at Miami (Ohio)	L	17-37
Nov. 15	Ohio	W	27-20
Nov. 22	at Eastern Michigan	L	21-26
Dec. 19	vs. Tulsa #	L	20-55

#Miami Beach Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Keegan Cossou, TE, Greenville, MI
2. JaCorey Sullivan, WR, Muskegon, MI
3. Johnathan Berghorst, DL, Zeeland, MI
4. Erik Ditzhazy, OL, Grand Rapids, MI
5. Devonni Reed, S, Ypsilanti, MI
6. Troy Brown, S, Flint, MI
7. Drayton Law, WR, Mobile, AL
8. Chuck Jones, LB, Ypsilanti, MI
9. Steven Spenner, LB, Berrien Center, MI
10. Shawn Wiley, OG, Jacksonville, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.3 ppg	7	83
Rushing	115.9 ypg	12	120
Passing	276.1 ypg	3	26
Total	392.0 ypg	8	78
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.3 ppg	8	79
Rushing	169.0 ypg	6	61
Passing	222.9 ypg	6	60
Total	391.9 ypg	5	54
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-6	-0.46	8	104

STAT CORNER

-8.5

The early upset of Oklahoma State threw Vegas off the scent. CMU underachieved its spread by 8.5 points per game, 124th in FBS.

OFFENSE For the first time since the Dan LeFevour era, Central Michigan will be returning to a spread offense under the direction of new offensive coordinator Chris Ostrowsky.

The two candidates at quarterback are promising 6'7" redshirt freshman Tony Poljan and Shane Morris, a grad transfer from Michigan. Morris, a former four-star recruit, started two games in his three active seasons with the Wolverines. He will enter preseason camp as the favorite but is by no means guaranteed to win the job.

Central Michigan actually improved a great deal in the run game from 2015 to '16 but still finished last in rushing yards in MAC play for a second straight year. It is in large part due to an offensive line that has not gotten the job done, an oddity for a program that usually churns out strong talent up front. The Chippewas do return all of their O-line starters.

Tailback Romello Ross emerged at the end of 2015 as a true freshman, but he missed all of last season with an ACL injury. Central Michigan is quite deep at the position, with the explosive Devon Spalding (758 yards), promising Jonathan Ward (200) and Minnesota transfer Berkley Edwards providing sparks.

Corey Willis, who caught 72 passes for 1,091 yards last season, is a first-team All-MAC candidate and leads the receiving corps. Mark Chapman (44 catches, 592 yards) and tight end Tyler Conklin (42, 560) are perfect complementary weapons for the Chips' spread attack. Conklin could have an NFL future.

DEFENSE Central Michigan ranked first in the MAC in total defense in 2014 and second in 2015 but dropped to fifth last year, allowing 391.9 yards per game. Pass defense was the issue; the Chips gave up 222.9 yards per game and allowed a league-high 33 TD passes.

Middle linebacker Malik Fountain (10 TFLs) is among the conference's best at his position. The linebackers around him are a question mark, but there are several players who have seen considerable playing time.

Amari Coleman and Josh Cox are entering their third year as starting cornerbacks, with Coleman earning first-team All-MAC honors last season. Safety is a different story. Both 2016 starters are gone, but hard-hitting Otis Kearney and former quarterback Zach Oakley will be interesting to watch develop.

Joe Ostman is a fifth-year senior who is the best pass rusher among a deep set of defensive ends. The Chips have ranked near the bottom of the league in sacks the last two seasons.

SPECIALISTS Major difficulties in the kicking department probably cost CMU a couple victories in 2016, so new placekicker Kaden Keon will counted on to provide more consistency. He was used exclusively on kickoffs as a true freshman. Australian Jack Sheldon and Cooper Mosjiejenko will continue to share punting duties. The Chippewas have not been strong in the return department since the Antonio Brown era (late 2000s), so any positives there would be a boost.

FINAL ANALYSIS John Bonamego guided the Chips to a surprising 6–2 record in league play in 2015, his first season as the head coach at his alma mater, but slumped to 3–5 in Year 2. Still, CMU has been to two straight bowl games. Making it three straight will be a challenge.

Gone is four-year starting quarterback Cooper Rush, the second-most prolific passer in conference history. There are proven talents on both sides of the ball, but there are still areas of concern — the new QB, the running game, the pass defense, to name a few. A middle-of-the pack finish in the MAC West would be a success.



COREY WILLIS

"Replacing Cooper Rush will be big for them. They slid down the stretch and could open this season the same way if they don't shake some things up."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	8 **Corey Willis (Sr.)**	12	Eric Cooper (Sr.)
WR	3 **Mark Chapman (Sr.)**	4	Jamil Sabbagh (So.)
WR	18 Brandon Childress (So.)	6	Bailey Edwards (Fr.)
LT	59 **Joe Austin (Sr.)**	76	Jack Ford (Sr.)
LG	70 **Shakir Carr (Jr.)**	66	Logan Slaughter (So.)
C	79 **Austin Doan (Sr.)**	72	Matt Doan (So.)
RG	67 **J.P. Quinn (Sr.)**	58	Joe Komel (Jr.)
RT	74 **Derek Edwards (Sr.)**	60	Steve Eipper (So.)
TE	83 **Tyler Conklin (Sr.)**	85	Jonathan Carson (Jr.)
QB	17 Shane Morris (Sr.)	1	Tony Poljan (So.)
RB	34 Romello Ross (Jr.)	25	**Devon Spalding (Sr.)**

DEFENSE (6)

DE	45 **Joe Ostman (Sr.)**	46	Nate Brisson-Fast (Jr.)
DT	95 D'Andre Dill (So.)	55	Michael Steinhauer (Sr.)
DT	90 **Chris Kantzavelos (Sr.)**	97	Shahid Bellamy (So.)
DE	57 Mike Danna (So.)	44	Mitch Stanitzek (Sr.)
OLB	39 Michael Oliver (So.)	11	Trevor Apsey (Jr.)
MLB	8 **Malik Fountain (Jr.)**	30	**Alex Briones (Jr.)**
OLB	32 Jeff Perry (Sr.)	43	Carlos Clark (So.)
CB	7 **Amari Coleman (Sr.)**	27	Sean Bunting (So.)
CB	14 **Josh Cox (Sr.)**	6	Da'Quaun Jamison (So.)
FS	38 Ray Golden (Sr.)	10	Zach Oakley (Jr.)
SS	37 Otis Kearney (Jr.)	36	Tyjuan Swain (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	13 Kaden Keon (So.)	KR	5 Jonathan Ward (So.)
P	99 Jack Sheldon (Jr.)	PR	4 Jamil Sabbagh (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jonathan Ward, 2-1-31-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Devon Spalding, 138 att., 758 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Corey Willis, 72 rec., 1,091 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Malik Fountain, 92
Sacks: Joe Ostman, 9.0
Interceptions: Amari Coleman, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: John Bonamego
Record at School: 13-13 (2 years)
Career Record: 13-13 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Chris Ostrowsky
Defensive Coordinator: Greg Colby
Mount Pleasant, MI • Kelly/Shorts Stadium (30,255)

Scott W. Grau/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

EASTERN MICHIGAN EAGLES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **102** • MAC WEST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 4-4 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Charlotte
Sept. 9	at Rutgers
Sept. 23	Ohio
Sept. 30	at Kentucky
Oct. 7	at Toledo
Oct. 14	at Army
Oct. 21	Western Michigan
Oct. 26	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 2	Ball State
Nov. 8	at Central Michigan
Nov. 15	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 21	Bowling Green

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 MAC

Sept. 2	Miss. Valley St.	W	61-14
Sept. 10	at Missouri	L	21-61
Sept. 17	at Charlotte	W	37-19
Sept. 23	Wyoming	W	27-24
Oct. 1	at Bowling Green	W	28-25
Oct. 8	Toledo	L	20-35
Oct. 15	at Ohio	W	27-20
Oct. 22	at Western Michigan	L	31-45
Oct. 29	Miami (Ohio)	L	15-28
Nov. 8	at Ball State	W	48-41
Nov. 16	Northern Illinois (ot)	L	24-31
Nov. 22	Central Michigan	W	26-21
Dec. 23	vs. Old Dominion #	L	20-24

#Bahamas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jairus Grissom, QB, Dearborn Heights, MI
2. Jeff Hubbard, DB, Atlanta, GA
3. Shaq Jones, DB, Philadelphia, PA*
4. C.J. Hunt, DL, Avon, IN
5. Preston Hutchinson, QB, Mason, OH
6. Desean Boyd, LB, Detroit, MI
7. Tyler LaBarbera, DL, Elk Grove Village, IL*
8. Sam Dervil, DL, Miami, FL*
9. Francisco Pedrozo, OL, Canton, OH
10. Gregory Jean, WR, Fort Lauderdale, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.6 ppg	4	61
Rushing	157.1 ypg	8	85
Passing	295.1 ypg	2	18
Total	452.2 ypg	4	35
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.8 ppg	6	76
Rushing	167.5 ypg	5	59
Passing	263.2 ypg	10	108
Total	431.7 ypg	7	83
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	3	58

STAT CORNER

+14

EMU's turnover margin changed from minus-13 in '15 to plus-1. As a result, the Eagles went from zero one-possession wins to five.

OFFENSE Brogan Roback, a former four-star recruit, has appeared in 34 games (23 starts) during his career. He took his game to another level in 2016, throwing for 2,694 yards and 18 touchdowns in 10 games after being suspended to begin the season. True freshman Jairus Grissom appears to be the QB of the future, and Todd Porter provides an experienced backup, but this is Roback's offense to guide for one more year.

The return from injury of Shaq Vann (121 carries, 752 yards in his career) to lead the rushing attack will be a huge boost to a position group that managed quite well without him last year thanks to the emergence of Ian Eriksen (771 yards) and Breck Turner (417), both of whom will be back in the fold. The depth at the position will be invaluable.

Dieuly Aristilde came out of nowhere to emerge as Roback's go-to threat the second half of 2016. After catching only one pass for 20 yards in the first eight games, he had 24 receptions for 472 yards in the last five games. Aristilde, still just a sophomore, will team with several proven veterans to form a solid receiving corps.

The biggest question mark for the Eagles offense is on the line, where three full-time starters graduated and some restructuring must be done. Look for junior guard Jimmy Leatiota, a returning starter, to lead this group, but he will need some help.

DEFENSE Eastern Michigan was not abysmal on defense in 2016, a huge step in the right direction after so many years of being gashed play after play. The biggest progress was made in preventing big plays in the run game. In 2015, the Eagles allowed 120 rushing plays of 10-plus yards, by far the most in the nation; last year, they led the MAC in the category, allowing only 49. EMU was sixth in the league in scoring defense (29.8 ppg) and seventh in total defense (432.7 ypg), areas that could see improvement this fall.

At safety, Anthony Brown is back after missing last year with an injury. His presence gives EMU plenty of versatility in the secondary as he joins Jason Beck and Vince Calhoun as disruptive playmakers. Former three-star recruit Shaq Jones transfers in from junior college and will have an opportunity to start at cornerback.

Kyle Rachwal led the team with 109 tackles last year as one of two starting linebackers in defensive coordinator Neal Nethery's 4-2-5 scheme. Ike Spearman and Jaylen Pickett are solid options opposite Rachwal.

Finding a pass rusher to replace the graduated Pat O'Connor (8.5 sacks and 14.5 tackles for a loss) will be a challenge. Jeremiah Harris and Maxx Crosby will be counted on to produce.

SPECIALISTS There were no issues last year with either placekicker Paul Fricano (19-of-24 on field goals) or punter Austin Barnes (43.5-yard average), both of whom return. Blake Banham had some success in both facets of the return game and is expected to reprise that role.

FINAL ANALYSIS Eastern Michigan played in its first bowl game in 29 years last year, a major step forward for a program known mostly for its futility. Was it a one-year mirage or a sign of what is to come? Coach Chris Creighton has revamped the entire image of the program, and he heads into his fourth year hoping to turn the Eagles into a MAC West contender. The returning pieces are talented enough for it to be a possibility — though the West is by far the tougher of the MAC's two divisions. The feeling around Eagles camp is that they will go as far as their revamped offensive line can take them.



BROGAN ROBACK

"Chris (Creighton) and his staff deserve a ton of credit. That program had been such an afterthought for so long."

– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	15	Dieuly Aristilde (So.)	**89**	**Johnnie Niupalau (Sr.)**	
WR	**23**	**Sergio Bailey II (Sr.)**	**40**	**Eddie Daugherty (Jr.)**	
WR	21	Antoine Porter (Sr.)	87	Mathew Sexton (So.)	
LT	79	Pete Bergman (So.)	65	Sam Dervil (Jr.)	
LG	59	Dan Samuelson (Sr.)	78	Steve Nielsen (So.)	
C	78	Dakota Tallman (Jr.)	77	Chris Bukoski (Jr.)	
RG	**56**	**Jimmy Leatiota (Jr.)**	**54**	**Ka'John Armstrong (Jr.)**	
RT	73	Rob Pavletich (So.)	65	Sam Dervil (Jr.)	
TE	82	Nigel Kilby (So.)	**85**	**Dan Buschman (Sr.)**	
QB	**4**	**Brogan Roback (Sr.)**	8	Todd Porter (Sr.)	
RB	5	Shaq Vann (Jr.)	**25**	**Ian Eriksen (Jr.)**	

DEFENSE (8)

DE	**90**	**Jeremiah Harris (Jr.)**	55	Clay Holford (So.)	
DT	99	Dion Dawson (Sr.)	**8**	**Luke Maclean (Sr.)**	
NT	95	Oddie Granger (Sr.)	93	Derrick Dunlap (Sr.)	
DE	92	Maxx Crosby (So.)	56	Justice Williams (Fr.)	
LB	**9**	**Ike Spearman (Sr.)**	6	Jaylen Pickett (Jr.)	
LB	**51**	**Kyle Rachwal (Jr.)**	**42**	**Derric Williams (Sr.)**	
CB	12	Jalen Phelps (So.)	17	Shaq Jones (Jr.)	
CB	23	Kevin McGill (So.)	32	Juan Giraldo (Sr.)	
S	22	Anthony Brown (Sr.)	24	Brody Hoying (So.)	
S	**3**	**Jason Beck (Sr.)**	13	Justin Moody (Jr.)	
S	**10**	**Vince Calhoun (So.)**	**7**	**Ikie Calderon (Sr.)**	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	66	Paul Fricano (So.)	KR	20	Blake Banham (Jr.)
P	17	Austin Barnes (Sr.)	PR	20	Blake Banham (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brogan Roback, 372-219-2,694-7, 18 TDs
Rushing: Ian Eriksen, 184 att., 771 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Sergio Bailey II, 60 rec., 868 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Kyle Rachwal, 109
Sacks: Jeremiah Harris, 4.0
Interceptions: Vince Calhoun, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Chris Creighton
Record at School: 10-27 (3 years)
Career Record: 149-73 (20 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Aaron Keen
Defensive Coordinator: Neal Neathery
Ypsilanti, MI • Rynearson Stadium (30,200)

Steve King/EMUEaglesPhoto.com

NORTHERN ILLINOIS HUSKIES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **99** • MAC WEST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 5-3 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Boston College
Sept.	9	Eastern Illinois
Sept.	16	at Nebraska
Sept.	30	at San Diego State
Oct.	7	Kent State
Oct.	14	at Buffalo
Oct.	21	at Bowling Green
Oct.	26	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	2	at Toledo
Nov.	9	Ball State
Nov.	15	Western Michigan
Nov.	24	at Central Michigan

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 5-3 MAC

Sept.	3	at Wyoming (ot)	L	34-40
Sept.	10	at South Florida	L	17-48
Sept.	17	San Diego State	L	28-42
Sept.	24	Western Illinois	L	23-28
Oct.	1	at Ball State	W	31-24
Oct.	8	at Western Michigan	L	30-45
Oct.	15	Central Michigan (ot)	L	28-34
Oct.	22	Buffalo	W	44-7
Nov.	1	Bowling Green	W	45-20
Nov.	9	vs. Toledo #	L	24-31
Nov.	16	at Eastern Michigan (ot)	W	31-24
Nov.	25	at Kent State	W	31-21

#Chicago

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Isaac Hawn, OL, St. Charles, IL
2. Jordan Rowell, RB, Elmhurst, IL
3. Cole Tucker, WR, DeKalb, IL
4. Cole Webster, OL, Bettendorf, IA
5. Tyrice Richie, WR, Homewood, IL
6. Dennis Robinson, WR, Hollywood, FL
7. Rodney Hall, QB, Detroit, MI
8. Liam Soraghan, TE, Dearborn, MI
9. Devin Webster, DL, Sun Prairie, WI*
10. Jawon Denton, DE, Chicago, IL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.5 ppg	3	55
Rushing	239.8 ypg	1	16
Passing	224.0 ypg	10	73
Total	463.8 ypg	3	27
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.3 ppg	9	80
Rushing	200.8 ypg	10	88
Passing	250.7 ypg	8	93
Total	451.5 ypg	9	98
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	6	75

STAT CORNER

1.9

One problem NIU did not have in 2016: sacks. The Huskies allowed only a 1.9% sack rate on passing downs, lowest in FBS.

OFFENSE For the second consecutive season, the Huskies were ravaged by injuries at quarterback. Over the last two years, a total of 26 games, Northern Illinois has started five different quarterbacks, including four last season.

Season-ending injuries have become a theme for NIU after years of stability at the position, leading to only 13 wins over the last two seasons. Doubt continues to hang over the position entering the fall, as the competition is wide open, with junior Ryan Graham and sophomore Daniel Santacaterina, two suburban Chicago products from high-profile programs, as the leading candidates. Both are capable but lack big-play prowess or possess a tangible trait of strength that sticks out.

The Huskies lost reliable back Joel Bouagnon, but Jordan Huff and Marcus Jones have the potential to be a formidable pair, combining with Tommy Mister to form a quality backfield.

The biggest hole on the offense is the graduation of all-conference wide receiver Kenny Golladay. Christian Blake (34 catches, 457 yards) is the only returnee among the wideouts who had more than nine catches last season.

Three starters return from an offensive line that tied with Troy for the least amount of sacks (eight) allowed in the nation last season. Junior tackle Max Scharping and guard Jordan Steckler headline a strong and talented left side.

DEFENSE Opponents padded their offensive stats against the Huskies last season, particularly in the first half of the season before the defense righted itself with a better showing in the final five games. The front four is under massive construction, once again, as tackle William Lee is the lone returning starter. Last year, the Huskies ranked No. 88 in rushing defense (200.8 ypg) and No. 98 in total defense (451.5 ypg).

The linebackers are nearly an entirely new cast, although Jawuan Johnson, Kyle Pugh and Bobby Jones IV have experience on their sides.

The good news is that the secondary is talented, full of experience and chock-full of depth. Senior cornerback Shawun Lurry, a FWAA first-team All-American as a sophomore, might have to battle for playing time with Albert Smalls returning from an injury and former Iowa Hawkeye Jalen Embry finally eligible.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Christian Hagan is the lone specialist with significant experience, but after a slight drop-off in accuracy, he must elevate his game. Senior punter Josh Orne, also a kickoff specialist, owns one of the more unique stat lines — he has three career tackles but not a single punt in the last three years. Huff inherits the tough task of replacing all-conference kick returner Aregeros Turner. Chad Beebe is slated to take over at punt returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS Rod Carey enters a pivotal year, as some of the luster of NIU's BCS Orange Bowl berth is starting to wear off after the Huskies' school-record run of eight straight bowl appearances came to a disappointing end with a 5–7 record. Even though a third straight season with a series of injuries at the quarterback position is unlikely, the in-house candidates lack the star power or dual-threat ability of past signal callers.

Overall, the defense should be improved, especially the front four, but with the lingering issues on offense, the Huskies could be in store for a difficult season battling a non-conference schedule that features Boston College, Nebraska and San Diego State to go with league road games at Toledo and Central Michigan.

On the positive side, if the Huskies can finish 5–3 in the conference utilizing three different starters at quarterback — like they did last season — anything is possible.



JORDAN HUFF

"They're consistent with their coaching and development, and they're recruiting their home state the right way."

– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	4	**Christian Blake (Sr.)**	14	Spencer Tears (So.)
WR	82	Chad Beebe (Sr.)	3	Ezra Saffold (Sr.)
WR	10	D.J. Brown (Jr.)	9	Jauan Wesley (Jr.)
LT	73	**Max Scharping (Jr.)**	63	Ezekiel Gueths (Fr.)
LG	72	**Jordan Steckler (So.)**	58	Brayden Patton (Fr.)
C	64	**Luke Shively (Jr.)**	54	Austin Warner (Fr.)
RG	77	Shane Evans (Jr.)	76	Dale Brown (Jr.)
RT	56	Ryan Roberts (So.)	71	Isaac Hawn (Fr.)
TE	35	**Shane Wimann (Sr.)**	89	Mitchell Brinkman (So.)
QB	17	Ryan Graham (Jr.)	7	Daniel Santacaterina (So.)
RB	23	Jordan Huff (Sr.)	21	Marcus Jones (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	43	Sutton Smith (So.)	53	Quintin Wynne (So.)
DT	99	Ben LeRoy (So.)	96	Marcus Kelly (So.)
NG	90	**William Lee (Sr.)**	94	Devin Webster (Jr.)
DE	12	Josh Corcoran (Jr.)	9	Joe Sanders (Sr.)
OLB	7	Jawuan Johnson (Jr.)	37	Lance Deveaux Jr. (So.)
MLB	57	Kyle Pugh (So.)	18	Alex Schwab (Sr.)
OLB	6	**Bobby Jones IV (Sr.)**	48	Antonio Jones-Davis (So.)
CB	1	Albert Smalls (Jr.)	5	**Mayomi Olootu Jr. (Sr.)**
CB	19	**Shawun Lurry (Sr.)**	3	Jalen Embry (Jr.)
SS	24	**Trequan Smith (So.)**	49	Trayshon Foster (So.)
FS	20	**Mycial Allen (Sr.)**	2	Brandon Mayes (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	34	Christian Hagan (Sr.)	KR	23	Jordan Huff (Sr.)
P	25	Josh Orne (Sr.)	PR	82	Chad Beebe (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ryan Graham, 127-71-680-6, 8 TDs
Rushing: Jordan Huff, 111 att., 703 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Christian Blake, 34 rec., 457 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Brandon Mayes, 71
Sacks: Josh Corcoran, 3.0
Interceptions: Shawun Lurry, 3; Mayomi Olootu, Jr., 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Rod Carey
Record at School: 36-19 (4+ years)
Career Record: 36-19 (4+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Uremovich
Defensive Coordinator: Kevin Kane
DeKalb, IL • Huskie Stadium (23,595)

Scott Walstrom/NIU Photography

TOLEDO ROCKETS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **69** • MAC WEST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **10-3, 6-2 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	Elon
Sept.	9	at Nevada
Sept.	16	Tulsa
Sept.	23	at Miami (Fla.)
Oct.	7	Eastern Michigan
Oct.	14	at Central Michigan
Oct.	21	Akron
Oct.	26	at Ball State
Nov.	2	Northern Illinois
Nov.	8	at Ohio
Nov.	15	at Bowling Green
Nov.	24	Western Michigan

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 6-2 MAC

Sept.	2	at Arkansas State	W	31-10
Sept.	10	Maine	W	45-3
Sept.	17	Fresno State	W	52-17
Sept.	30	at BYU	L	53-55
Oct.	8	at Eastern Michigan	W	35-20
Oct.	15	Bowling Green	W	42-35
Oct.	22	Central Michigan	W	31-17
Oct.	27	Ohio	L	26-31
Nov.	2	at Akron	W	48-17
Nov.	9	vs. Northern Illinois #	W	31-24
Nov.	16	Ball State	W	37-19
Nov.	25	at Western Michigan	L	35-55
Dec.	17	vs. Appalachian State %	L	28-31

#Chicago %Camellia Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kedonis Haslem, OL, Miami, FL
2. Tadarrius Patterson, LB, Birmingham, AL
3. Tyrone Chambers, DL, Cleveland, OH
4. Drew Rosi, DE/TE, Powell, OH
5. Nick Kovacs, WR, Springboro, OH
6. Victor Williams Jr., DB, Warren, OH
7. DeAmonte King, WR/DB, Akron, OH
8. Kelvin Ateman Jr., OL, Detroit, MI
9. Reggie Howard, DL, Cincinnati, OH*
10. Mitchell Berg, OL, Maumee, OH

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.0 ppg	2	19
Rushing	195.0 ypg	4	46
Passing	322.8 ypg	1	10
Total	517.8 ypg	1	7
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.7 ppg	4	48
Rushing	175.8 ypg	7	67
Passing	220.8 ypg	5	56
Total	396.5 ypg	6	57
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.31	7	90

STAT CORNER

+0.9

Toledo averaged 5.3 points per trip inside the 40 and allowed 4.4. This plus-0.9 margin was 14th in FBS and first in the MAC.

OFFENSE Second-year head coach Jason Candle has key elements at his disposal to field one of the more explosive units in the country — a solid encore after Toledo averaged 38.0 points and led the MAC with 517.8 yards per game of offense in 2016.

Senior quarterback Logan Woodside led the nation a year ago with 45 touchdown passes — he threw at least three in every regular-season game — while connecting on 69.1 percent of his throws for 4,129 yards. Woodside has two of his top three receivers back in senior Cody Thompson and junior Jon'Vea Johnson. Thompson had 68 catches and 11 scores, while Johnson caught 40 balls with 10 touchdowns — and both averaged nearly 20 yards per reception. Senior Adam Kulon, who had one catch for six yards a year ago, has the huge task of replacing All-America tight end Michael Roberts and his 16 touchdown receptions.

Career rushing leader Kareem Hunt is gone, but his backup, senior Terry Swanson, earned second-team All-MAC honors in 2015 with nearly 1,000 yards. Backing Swanson up is explosive sophomore Art Thompkins, who averaged 8.1 yards on his 29 carries last year.

Up front, the Rockets lose three starters, but a core group of five experienced players should give the unit a strong foundation. Seniors Elijah Nkansah, Nate Jeppesen and Brant Weiss, sophomore center Bryce Harris and junior Yazeed Atariwa have all been at least part-time starters or top reserves. A two-year starter, Nkansah will anchor the group at left tackle.

DEFENSE The Toledo defense is looking for leadership and an all-conference performance from fifth-year senior tackle Marquise Moore, who has 21 career starts. The 300-pounder had 36 stops last season and will be counted on to be an every-down player. Senior Daniel Davis, sophomores Nate Childress, Lamarr Davis and Willie Ross, as well as junior college transfer Reggie Howard all figure to get snaps alongside Moore. Junior Olasunkanmi Adeniyi, with 49 stops a year ago, is locked in at end, where seniors Zach Quinn and Tuzar Skipper will see significant action.

The linebacker position is experienced with junior Tyler Taafe and seniors Ja'Wuan Woodley and Jack Linch. Woodley earned third-team All-MAC honors last season.

Senior Trevon Mathis, with 13 starts and 44 tackles last season, and junior Ka'dar Hollman, with eight starts and 33 stops, return at cornerback. Junior Josh Teachey is a leading candidate at strong safety after starting 12 games at the hybrid Star position a year ago. Sophomore Ronnie Jones also will see time at safety, along with redshirt freshman Jordan Williams and sophomores Kahlil Robinson and Calvin Bransford.

SPECIALISTS Backup quarterback Michael Julian is slated to handle the punting this season. Junior Jameson Vest and senior Sam Vucelich likely will again split the kicking duties, with Vest handling field goals — he made 13-of-19 last year — and Vucelich working kickoffs. Sophomores Diontae Johnson, Danzel McKinley-Lewis and Art Thompkins will share return duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS A schedule that includes Tulsa at home and the Miami Hurricanes on the road presents its challenges, but the Rockets have the league's best quarterback, tremendous depth and talent at wide receiver and a stable of productive running backs that never seems to thin. The defense doesn't have to be great for this team to succeed; another middle-of-the pack finish in the MAC stats should suffice. The Rockets have won at least nine game five times in the last six seasons yet have not played in the MAC Championship Game since 2004. That drought should end in 2017.



LOGAN WOODSIDE

"Everything seems to be in place for them to make a run at the (conference) title and maybe some national noise. They could be dangerous."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	25	**Cody Thompson (Sr.)**	84	Darryl Richards (Sr.)
WR	7	**Jon'Vea Johnson (Jr.)**	19	Diontae Johnson (So.)
WR	22	Danzel McKinley-Lewis (So.)	10	Desmond Phillips (So.)
LT	76	**Elijah Nkansah (Sr.)**	58	Cameron Bell (So.)
LG	78	Yazeed Atariwa (Jr.)	53	Bill Weber (Jr.)
C	72	Bryce Harris (So.)	61	Carter Paddy (So.)
RG	60	**Nate Jeppesen (Sr.)**	56	Chandler Cotterman (So.)
RT	71	Brant Weiss (Sr.)	57	Brandon Heidecker (So.)
TE	45	Adam Kulon (Sr.)	46	Jordan Fisher (So.)
QB	11	**Logan Woodside (Sr.)**	5	Michael Julian (Sr.)
RB	2	Terry Swanson (Sr.)	33	Art Thompkins (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	9	**Olasunkanmi Adeniyi (Jr.)**	31	Zach Quinn (Sr.)
DT	92	Daniel Davis (Sr.)	95	Willie Ross (So.)
DT	52	**Marquise Moore (Sr.)**	93	Nate Childress (So.)
DE	99	Tuzar Skipper (Sr.)	54	Andrew Boczar (So.)
LB	30	**Ja'Wuan Woodley (Sr.)**	40	Tre'Shun Wilson (R-Fr.)
LB	17	**Tyler Taafe (Jr.)**	29	Jack Linch (Sr.)
STAR	21	DeDarallo Blue (So.)	15	Anthony Davis (Jr.)
CB	6	**Trevon Mathis (Sr.)**	11	Marcus Whitfield (Jr.)
CB	13	**Ka'dar Hollman (Jr.)**	28	Aaron Covington (So.)
S	35	Ronnie Jones (So.)	27	Kahlil Robinson (So.)
S	8	**Josh Teachey (Jr.)**	34	Jordan Williams (R-Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	37	Jameson Vest (Jr.)	KR	19	Diontae Johnson (So.)
P	5	Michael Julian (Sr.)	PR	22	D. McKinley-Lewis (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Logan Woodside, 418-289-4,129-9, 45 TDs
Rushing: Terry Swanson, 116 att., 583 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Cody Thompson, 68 rec., 1,269 yds., 11 TDs
Tackles: Ja'Wuan Woodley, 79
Sacks: Olasunkanmi Adeniyi, 4.0
Interceptions: Aaron Covington, 1; Trevon Mathis, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jason Candle
Record at School: 10-4 (1+ year)
Career Record: 10-4 (1+ year)
Offensive Coordinator: Brian Wright
Defensive Coordinator: Brian George
Toledo, OH • Glass Bowl (26,248)

Daniel Miller/The University of Toledo

WESTERN MICHIGAN BRONCOS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **83** • MAC WEST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 MAC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at USC
Sept.	9	at Michigan State
Sept.	16	Idaho
Sept.	23	Wagner
Sept.	30	Ball State
Oct.	7	at Buffalo
Oct.	14	Akron
Oct.	21	at Eastern Michigan
Nov.	1	Central Michigan
Nov.	8	Kent State
Nov.	15	at Northern Illinois
Nov.	24	at Toledo

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 13-1, 8-0 MAC

Sept.	3	at Northwestern	W	22-21
Sept.	10	NC Central	W	70-21
Sept.	17	at Illinois	W	34-10
Sept.	24	Georgia Southern	W	49-31
Oct.	1	at Central Michigan	W	49-10
Oct.	8	Northern Illinois	W	45-30
Oct.	15	at Akron	W	41-0
Oct.	22	Eastern Michigan	W	45-31
Nov.	1	at Ball State	W	52-20
Nov.	8	at Kent State	W	37-21
Nov.	19	Buffalo	W	38-0
Nov.	25	Toledo	W	55-35
Dec.	2	vs. Ohio #	W	29-23
Jan.	2	vs. Wisconsin %	L	16-24

#Detroit %Cotton Bowl Classic

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Zenden Dellinger, OL, Fort Wayne, IN
2. Trevor Campbell, OL, Naperville, IL
3. Luke Sanders, WR, Fishers, IN
4. Dwayne Chapman, LB, West Bloomfield, MI
5. Tanner Motz, LB, St. John's, MI
6. Treshaun Hayward, LB, Ypsilanti, MI
7. Derrick Hubbard, LB, Ypsilanti, MI
8. Ralph Holley Jr., DL, West Bloomfield, MI
9. K.J. Anderson, DB, Buford, GA
10. A.J. Thomas, DB, Detroit, MI

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	41.6 ppg	1	9
Rushing	228.9 ypg	2	24
Passing	252.4 ypg	5	49
Total	481.2 ypg	2	19
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	19.8 ppg	1	15
Rushing	153.6 ypg	4	49
Passing	200.1 ypg	3	25
Total	353.6 ypg	2	26
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MAC**	**NATIONAL**
+18	+1.29	1	1

STAT CORNER

+18

Based on fumble recovery and interception rates, WMU's expected turnover margin was plus-3. Actual margin: plus-18.

AP

OFFENSE Western Michigan's passing game will undoubtedly take a step back this season, having lost All-America wideout Corey Davis and four-year starting quarterback Zach Terrell. But for a team breaking in a new QB and three new starting wideouts — along with a new coaching staff — the situation offensively couldn't be better.

The Broncos return three starters on the offensive line, their run-blocking veteran tight end and a punishing and diverse backfield duo in Jarvion Franklin (1,353 yards, 12 touchdowns) and Jamauri Bogan (923, eight TDs). Expect converted receiver LeVante Bellamy to be featured running the ball as well in an offense that first-year head coach Tim Lester says won't change much schematically from what the Broncos ran under P.J. Fleck.

WMU's high hopes for its ground game change its needs at quarterback, which is a two-man competition between junior Tom Flacco — the brother of Baltimore Ravens QB Joe Flacco — and sophomore Jon Wassink. Flacco spent the last two years as Terrell's backup and has been used in quarterback-run situations. Decision making, above all else, will decide the position. "It's not like we can't run the ball so we need the guy with the strongest arm because he's going to throw it 50 times a game," Lester says. "We need the most efficient guy."

Whoever wins the gig will be throwing to a group of receivers that has just 19 career catches among them — 18 of them by sophomore D'Wayne Eskridge. "He has legit speed. He can roll," Lester says of Eskridge.

DEFENSE Among the reasons WMU's young receivers struggled in spring practice is the group of defensive backs lined up across from them. Senior corner Darius Phillips and sophomore safety Justin Tranquill headline an experienced and talented crew. In front of them is a linebacking corps that might be just as strong, especially with the return of leading tackler and senior middle linebacker Robert Spillane, who left the program intending to transfer after Fleck's departure but had a change of heart in April. He's flanked on the strong side by senior Asantay Brown, who led the Broncos in solo stops last season.

WMU lost its top pass rusher in Keion Adams, but Lester is hoping junior Eric Assoua can fill that role at defensive end after a "phenomenal spring." Andre Turner and Nick Matich, who missed all of last season with an injury, give WMU experience in the interior.

SPECIALISTS Phillips is among the most dangerous return men in the country on both punts and kickoffs. He returned one of each for a touchdown last season. "Those are opportunities to get him the ball. Every time we get him the ball, something good happens," Lester says. Thirty-year-old junior punter Derrick Mitchell is back as well — although he'll miss a day early in fall camp to get married. Josh Grant, a true freshman out of Texas, is expected to be the Broncos' kicker, replacing Butch Hampton, who set a MAC record for points as a freshman last season before leaving the program to play college soccer.

FINAL ANALYSIS This is Lester's dream job. He starred as a quarterback at WMU in the late 1990s, later briefly coached QBs at the school under Bill Cubit and applied for the job in 2012, when Fleck got it. Lester understands the program, the MAC and the challenges ahead. This is a league known for bringing success back down to earth. It's also a fan base that just experienced the greatest year in school history and doesn't want to go back to reality. Lester inherits a roster that had completely bought into his predecessor. As long as the players also buy in to him, there's enough talent to compete for another league title in 2017.



JARVION FRANKLIN

"You can't replace P.J. Fleck. ... Western won't be undefeated this season, but there's still enough there to compete for the conference title."
– An opposing MAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	2	Anton Curtis (So.)	15	Giovanni Ricci (So.)	
WR	13	Keishawn Watson (So.)	23	Ra'Sean Davie (Fr.)	
WR	7	D'Wayne Eskridge (So.)	10	Hunter Broersma (Fr.)	
LT	77	**Chukwuma Okorafor (Sr.)**	60	Mark Brooks (Fr.)	
LG	67	Curtis Doyle (Jr.)	61	Mike Caliendo (Fr.)	
C	52	**John Keenoy (Jr.)**	62	Alex Keys (So.)	
RG	59	**Luke Juriga (So.)**	51	Jordan Asbury (Fr.)	
RT	75	Zach Novoselsky (Jr.)	70	Spencer Kanz (Fr.)	
TE	85	**Donnie Ernsberger (Sr.)**	38	Odell Miller (Jr.)	
QB	14	Tom Flacco (Jr.)	16	Jon Wassink (So.)	
RB	5	LeVante Bellamy (So.)	31	**Jarvion Franklin (Sr.)**	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	58	Antonio Balabani (So.)	36	DeShawn Foster (Jr.)	
DT	55	Nick Matich (Jr.)	91	Ken Finley (Jr.)	
DT	5	**Andre Turner (Sr.)**	98	Kailien Guillory (Fr.)	
DE	33	**Eric Assoua (Jr.)**	50	Daniel Jackson (Jr.)	
SLB	6	**Asantay Brown (Sr.)**	34	Alex Grace (So.)	
MLB	10	Robert Spillane (Sr.)	8	**Caleb Bailey (Sr.)**	
WLB	20	Drake Spears (So.)	34	Alex Grace (So.)	
CB	4	**Darius Phillips (Sr.)**	12	Emanuel Jackson (Fr.)	
CB	24	Obbie Jackson (So.)	1	**Sam Beal (Jr.)**	
SS	2	**Justin Tranquill (So.)**	31	Brad Tanner (So.)	
FS	9	Davontae Ginwright (So.)	21	Stefan Claiborne (So.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Josh Grant (Fr.)	KR	4	Darius Phillips (Sr.)
P	39	Derrick Mitchell (Jr.)	PR	4	Darius Phillips (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

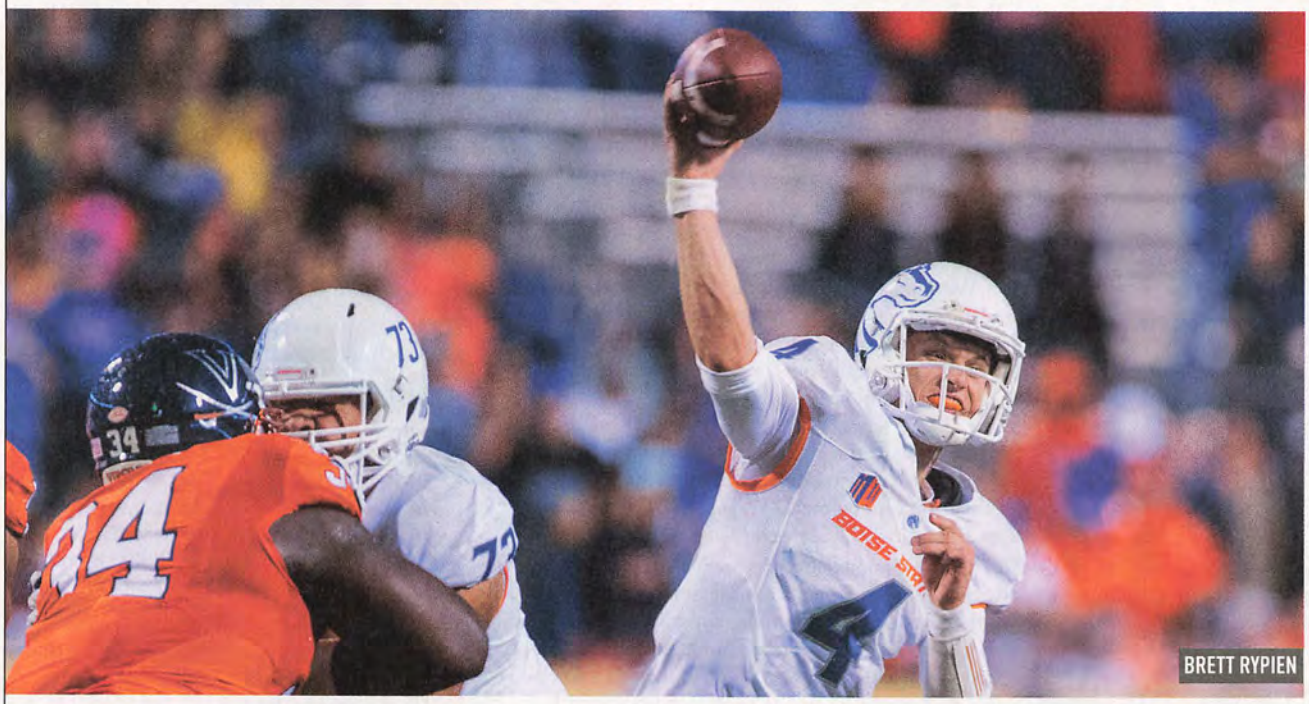
RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tom Flacco, 1-0-0-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Jarvion Franklin, 248 att., 1,353 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Jarvion Franklin, 25 rec., 288 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Robert Spillane, 111
Sacks: Eric Assoua, 3.5
Interceptions: Darius Phillips, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tim Lester
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Co-Offensive Coordinators: Kevin Johns, Jake Moreland
Co-Defensive Coordinators: Tim Daoust, Lou Esposito
Kalamazoo, MI • Waldo Stadium (30,200)

MOUNTAIN WEST PREVIEW



PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	MOUNTAIN	WEST
1	BOISE STATE BRONCOS 10-3, 7-1	SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS 8-5, 6-2
2	COLORADO STATE RAMS 8-4, 6-2	HAWAII RAINBOW WARRIORS 7-5, 5-3
3	WYOMING COWBOYS 7-5, 5-3	UNLV REBELS 4-8, 3-5
4	AIR FORCE FALCONS 6-6, 4-4	NEVADA WOLF PACK 3-9, 2-6
5	NEW MEXICO LOBOS 6-6, 4-4	FRESNO STATE BULLDOGS 3-9, 2-6
6	UTAH STATE AGGIES 4-8, 3-5	SAN JOSE STATE SPARTANS 2-11, 1-7

Mountain West Championship: Boise State over San Diego State

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Las Vegas Bowl: San Diego State 34, Houston 10
Cactus Bowl: Baylor 31, Boise State 12
Poinsettia Bowl: BYU 24, Wyoming 21
Famous Idaho Potato Bowl: Idaho 61, Colorado State 50
New Mexico Bowl: New Mexico 23, UTSA 20
Hawaii Bowl: Hawaii 52, Middle Tennessee 35
Arizona Bowl: Air Force 45, South Alabama 21

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Las Vegas Bowl: Boise State vs. Colorado
Famous Idaho Potato Bowl: San Diego State vs. Western Michigan
New Mexico Bowl: Colorado State vs. BYU
Arizona Bowl: Wyoming vs. Idaho
Hawaii Bowl: Hawaii vs. Houston

Rypien: Boise State Athletics; Butler: AP

2016 MW STANDINGS

MOUNTAIN	MW	OVERALL
BOISE STATE	6-2	10-3
NEW MEXICO	6-2	9-4
WYOMING	6-2	8-6
AIR FORCE	5-3	10-3
COLORADO STATE	5-3	7-6
UTAH STATE	1-7	3-9

WEST	MW	OVERALL
SAN DIEGO STATE	6-2	11-3
HAWAII	4-4	7-7
NEVADA	3-5	5-7
SAN JOSE STATE	3-5	4-8
UNLV	3-5	4-8
FRESNO STATE	0-8	1-11

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. Boise State
2. Colorado State
3. San Diego State
4. Fresno State
5. Hawaii
6. Nevada
7. Air Force
8. San Jose State
9. Wyoming
10. Utah State
11. New Mexico
12. UNLV

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
AIR FORCE	6	8	12	7	9	11	10
BOISE STATE	1	7	3	4	1	5	2
COLORADO STATE	3	2	2	1	4	1	6
FRESNO STATE	10	12	5	12	10	7	11
HAWAII	4	6	4	5	5	2	8
NEVADA	11	4	10	9	7	10	5
NEW MEXICO	8	5	9	6	6	8	12
SAN DIEGO STATE	7	1	11	8	2	3	1
SAN JOSE STATE	12	9	6	10	11	9	7
UNLV	9	3	1	2	12	12	9
UTAH STATE	5	10	7	11	8	6	4
WYOMING	2	11	8	3	3	4	3



JAMES BUTLER

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Brett Rypien	6-2	201	Jr.	Boise State
RB	James Butler	5-9	210	Sr.	Nevada
RB	Rashaad Penny	5-11	220	Sr.	San Diego State
AP	Tim McVey	5-9	190	Sr.	Air Force
WR	Devonte Boyd	6-1	185	Sr.	UNLV
WR	Michael Gallup	6-1	195	Sr.	Colorado State
WR	Cedrick Wilson	6-3	188	Sr.	Boise State
C	Jake Bennett	6-3	290	Sr.	Colorado State
OL	Dejon Allen	6-3	290	Sr.	Hawaii
OL	Austin Corbett	6-4	300	Sr.	Nevada
OL	Archie Lewis	6-3	300	Sr.	Boise State
OL	Zach Wallace	6-7	303	Jr.	Wyoming

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Garrett Hughes	6-1	264	Sr.	New Mexico
DL	Meffy Koloamatangi	6-5	240	Sr.	Hawaii
DL	David Moa	6-3	262	Jr.	Boise State
DL	Malik Reed	6-1	245	Jr.	Nevada
LB	Frank Ginda	6-0	241	Jr.	San Jose State
LB	Jahlani Tavai	6-4	235	Jr.	Hawaii
LB	Logan Wilson	6-2	229	So.	Wyoming
CB	Andre Chachere	6-0	192	Sr.	San Jose State
CB	Tyler Horton	5-11	183	Jr.	Boise State
S	Trayvon Henderson	6-0	200	Sr.	Hawaii
S	Andrew Wingard	6-0	209	Jr.	Wyoming

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	John Baron II	5-11	190	Jr.	San Diego State
P	Michael Carrizosa	5-10	219	Sr.	San Jose State
KR	Rashaad Penny	5-11	220	Sr.	San Diego State
PR	Quest Truxton	6-0	180	Sr.	San Diego State

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Josh Allen	6-5	233	Jr.	Wyoming
RB	Alexander Mattison	5-11	216	So.	Boise State
RB	Diocemy Saint Juste	5-8	200	Sr.	Hawaii
AP	Tyrone Owens	5-9	187	Jr.	New Mexico
WR	Wyatt Demps	6-4	200	Sr.	Nevada
WR	C.J. Johnson	6-2	204	So.	Wyoming
WR	John Ursua	5-10	165	So.	Hawaii
C	Mason Hampton	6-3	303	Sr.	Boise State
OL	Nathan Jacobson	6-5	280	Jr.	UNLV
OL	Aaron Jenkins	6-1	307	Jr.	New Mexico
OL	Jeremiah Kolone	6-3	301	Sr.	San Jose State
OL	Antonio Rosales	6-4	295	Sr.	San Diego State

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Carl Granderson	6-5	243	Jr.	Wyoming
DL	Mike Hughes Jr.	6-2	315	Sr.	UNLV
DL	Bryson Bridges	6-2	282	Jr.	San Jose State
DL	Ian Togiai	6-2	285	Sr.	Utah State
LB	Ronley Lakalaka	6-0	225	Jr.	San Diego State
LB	Gabe Sewell	6-0	230	So.	Nevada
LB	Josh Watson	6-2	235	Jr.	Colorado State
CB	Jalen Davis	5-10	185	Sr.	Utah State
CB	Ron Smith	6-0	170	So.	San Diego State
S	Dallin Leavitt	5-10	205	Sr.	Utah State
S	Asauni Rufus	6-0	200	Jr.	Nevada

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Luke Strebel	5-10	175	Sr.	Air Force
P	Evan Pantels	5-10	190	Jr.	UNLV
KR	Tim McVey	5-9	190	Sr.	Air Force
PR	Austin Conway	5-10	178	So.	Wyoming

AIR FORCE FALCONS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **77** • MW MOUNTAIN PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-4**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	VMI
Sept.	16	at Michigan
Sept.	23	San Diego State
Sept.	30	at New Mexico
Oct.	7	at Navy
Oct.	14	UNLV
Oct.	21	at Nevada
Oct.	28	at Colorado State
Nov.	4	Army
Nov.	11	Wyoming
Nov.	18	at Boise State
Nov.	25	Utah State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 5-3 MW

Sept.	3	Abilene Christian	W	37-21
Sept.	10	Georgia State	W	48-14
Sept.	24	at Utah State	W	27-20
Oct.	1	Navy	W	28-14
Oct.	8	at Wyoming	L	26-35
Oct.	15	vs. New Mexico #	L	40-45
Oct.	22	Hawaii (ot)	L	27-34
Oct.	28	at Fresno State	W	31-21
Nov.	5	at Army	W	31-12
Nov.	12	Colorado State	W	49-46
Nov.	19	at San Jose State	W	41-38
Nov.	25	Boise State	W	27-20
Dec.	30	vs. South Alabama %	W	45-21

#Dallas %Arizona Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Noah Bush, LB, Athens, TX
2. Brandon Gooding, DE, Ventura, CA
3. Darryl Giles, RB, Loganville, GA
4. Tre Bugg, DB, Gilbert, AZ
5. Robert Black IV, DB, Covington, GA
6. Cody Kanouse, OL, Gig Harbor, WA
7. Nolan McDonald, QB, Long Beach, CA
8. Britton Beasley, OL, Cordell, OK
9. David Cormier, WR, Albuquerque, NM
10. Riley Erickson, K/P, Phoenix, AZ

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.2 ppg	5	30
Rushing	317.4 ypg	2	3
Passing	134.8 ypg	11	123
Total	452.2 ypg	4	36
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.2 ppg	3	49
Rushing	114.2 ypg	2	10
Passing	250.7 ypg	12	94
Total	364.8 ypg	2	33
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.46	2	28

STAT CORNER

5.5/50.5

Air Force's average distance to go on third downs was 5.5 yards, fewest in FBS. Third-down conversion rate: 50.5% (sixth).

OFFENSE Quarterback Arion Worthman revived Air Force's sagging 2016 season, leading the Falcons to six straight wins while dominating the offense. In the Troy Calhoun era, which started in 2007, no QB had ever averaged more than 15 carries until Worthman's arrival. It instantly became obvious that Worthman enjoyed calling his own number. In his first 28 snaps as No. 1 quarterback, he carried the ball 19 times, and he averaged 22 carries per start.

He could become Air Force's version of Keenan Reynolds, Navy's dominating quarterback. He also could get injured from all those carries. Under Worthman, the offense averaged only 7.6 passes per game. For the attack to thrive, Worthman must improve in the pocket. He excelled as a runner but often failed to see wide-open receivers. Backup Nate Romine, a fifth-year senior, remains the team's best passer.

Jalen Robinette left a huge hole. He was a rarity in service academy football: an elite receiver. He accounted for more than half of the team's catches and receiving yards, and was the only wide receiver to catch a touchdown pass. Junior Jake Matkovich is the leading candidate to replace him. Tight end Ryan Reffitt doubles as a solid receiver and vicious blocker.

Tailback Tim McVey, who averaged 8.5 yards per carry, has been spectacular at times. He could team with Worthman to give the Falcons a devastating rushing attack. Center Alex Norton and right tackle James Rast anchor an offensive line that suffered the costly loss of coach Clay Hendrix, who departed to become head coach at Furman.

DEFENSE Coordinator Steve Russ will seek to renovate a depleted and young unit. He lost 12 of his top 13 tacklers and returns only one defender who saw significant playing time, linebacker Grant Ross.

Nose guard Mosese Fifita could become the program's first 300-pounder, although Calhoun wants him to play closer to 290. Fifita, stout and aggressive, will be especially valuable when the Falcons tangle with Navy's and Army's option attacks. Defensive end Santo Coppola played superbly in the spring and will be the team's top pass rusher. The Falcons badly need an increased pass rush. Last season, opposing quarterbacks could leisurely survey the field.

R.J. Jackson was on his way to becoming a top linebacker but suffered an ACL injury. His recovery will be crucial to the health of the defense.

The secondary must recover from the graduation of Weston Steelhammer, one of the top hitters in program history. Cornerback Marquis Griffin and safety Kyle Floyd lead an inexperienced collection of defensive backs.

SPECIALISTS Luke Strebel delivered a consistent season as placekicker. He's the leading candidate to start as punter, too. McVey is a superb kickoff returner who runs with power and speed. He broke a return for a TD last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Air Force averaged 38.6 points in Worthman's five starts last season. That lofty number might be required again, especially in the early weeks of the season while a youthful defense matures.

The offense should be powerful, and the experienced presence of Romine at backup quarterback means the team will not collapse if Worthman suffers an injury. McVey could soar past 1,500 yards this season and become the program's best running back since Chad Hall earned Heisman Trophy votes in 2007.

The team will be tested early, with trips to Michigan, New Mexico and Navy in the first five weeks of the season. Another 10-win finish is unlikely, but Worthman and McVey should carry the Falcons to at least six wins and the 10th bowl game in Calhoun's 11 seasons at the academy.



TIM MCVEY

"A lot of coaches expected Troy Calhoun to be gone by now. ... They've achieved what Navy has, where the turnover on the roster doesn't matter."

– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	17	Jake Matkovich (Jr.)	13	Cody Bronkar (Sr.)	
WR	**12**	**Tyler Williams (Sr.)**	4	Ronald Cleveland (Jr.)	
LT	**66**	**Jake Barnhorst (Sr.)**	75	Colin Marquez (So.)	
LG	64	Ryan Beveridge (Sr.)	62	Jordan Tyler (Sr.)	
C	**55**	**Alex Norton (Sr.)**	72	Haydn Lewis (So.)	
RG	74	Griffin Landrum (Jr.)	78	R.J. Slater (Sr.)	
RT	**77**	**James Rast (Sr.)**	68	George Jarvis III (Jr.)	
TE	**85**	**Ryan Reffitt (Sr.)**	86	C.J.Riazzi (Sr.)	
QB	2	Arion Worthman (Jr.)	6	Nate Romine (Sr.)	
TB	**33**	**Tim McVey (Sr.)**	24	Benton Washington (Sr.)	
FB	36	Parker Wilson (Jr.)	33	Tavin Birdow (So.)	

DEFENSE (1)

DE	96	Cody Moorhead (Sr.)	57	Ryan Darby (Jr.)
NG	95	Mosese Fifita (So.)	95	Cody Gessler (Jr.)
DT	97	Santo Coppola (Sr.)	90	Micah Capra (Jr.)
OLB	45	R.J. Jackson (Jr.)	35	Paul Love (Sr.)
ILB	**44**	**Grant Ross (Sr.)**	42	Blake Dailey (Jr.)
ILB	50	Jack Flor (Sr.)	49	Brody Bagnall (Jr.)
SPUR	6	Shaquille Vereen (Sr.)	7	Ja'Mel Sanders (Sr.)
CB	2	Marquis Griffin (Sr.)		Zane Lewis (So.)
CB	5	Dailen Sutton (Jr.)	15	Brett Baldwin (Sr.)
FS	4	James Jones (So.)	30	Garrett Kauppila (Jr.)
SS	29	Kyle Floyd (Jr.)	31	Russ Connors (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	11	Luke Strebel (Sr.)	KR	33	Tim McVey (Jr.)
P	11	Luke Strebel (Sr.)	PR	12	Tyler Williams (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Arion Worthman, 39-23-546-2, 4 TDs
Rushing: Tim McVey, 83 att., 708 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Tim McVey, 8 rec., 193 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Grant Ross, 67
Sacks: Grant Ross, 2.5
Interceptions: None

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Troy Calhoun
Record at School: 77-53 (10 years)
Career Record: 77-53 (10 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Thiessen
Defensive Coordinator: Steve Russ
Colorado Springs, CO • Falcon Stadium (46,692)

USAF Athletic Communications

BOISE STATE BRONCOS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **35** • MW MOUNTAIN PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **10-3, 7-1 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Troy
Sept.	9	at Washington State
Sept.	16	New Mexico
Sept.	22	Virginia
Oct.	6	at BYU
Oct.	14	at San Diego State
Oct.	21	Wyoming
Oct.	28	at Utah State
Nov.	4	Nevada
Nov.	11	at Colorado State
Nov.	18	Air Force
Nov.	25	at Fresno State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 6-2 MW

Sept.	3	at Louisiana	W	45-10
Sept.	10	Washington State	W	31-28
Sept.	24	at Oregon State	W	38-24
Oct.	1	Utah State	W	21-10
Oct.	7	at New Mexico	W	49-21
Oct.	15	Colorado State	W	28-23
Oct.	20	BYU	W	28-27
Oct.	29	at Wyoming	L	28-30
Nov.	4	San Jose State	W	45-31
Nov.	12	at Hawaii	W	52-16
Nov.	18	UNLV	W	42-25
Nov.	25	at Air Force	L	20-27
Dec.	27	vs. Baylor #	L	12-31

#Cactus Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jermani Brown, DB, Midlothian, VA
2. Isiah Moore, OL, Tiffin, OH*
3. Octavius Evans, WR, Center, TX
4. Chase Cord, QB, Peoria, AZ
5. Cartrell Thomas, WR, Lancaster, TX
6. Zeke Noa, LB, Spring Valley, CA
7. Aisa Kelemete, DE, Pocatello, ID
8. Drake Beasley, RB, La Canada, CA
9. Breydon Boyd, LB, Katy, TX
10. Marques Evans, CB, Pasadena, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.8 ppg	6	38
Rushing	174.5 ypg	7	63
Passing	298.3 ypg	1	15
Total	472.8 ypg	1	21
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	23.3 ppg	2	29
Rushing	176.8 ypg	4	69
Passing	213.0 ypg	7	46
Total	389.8 ypg	4	52
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
-9	-0.69	11	116

STAT CORNER

+1.6/-6.7

Boise State outgained foes by 1.6 yards per play, 10th in FBS. But a minus-6.7 yard shift in field position margin made life difficult.

OFFENSE Boise State moved the ball with relative ease in 2016, leading the Mountain West in total yardage, but the Broncos were sixth in the conference in scoring (33.8 ppg), their second-lowest output since 1998.

Junior quarterback Brett Rypien enters his third season as starter, and after an up-and-down sophomore year, he will look to improve his decision making in key situations. He loses the school's all-time leading receiver in Thomas Sperbeck but returns senior Cedrick Wilson (56 catches, 1,129 yards, 11 TDs). The rest of the receiving corps has combined for 28 career receptions.

The Broncos lost ultra-productive running back Jeremy McNichols to the NFL Draft, though sophomore Alexander Mattison, who had 328 yards on 67 carries last season, has the makings of the next great Boise State back. Only one other running back on the roster has played in a game for the Broncos.

Three starters graduated off the offensive line, but senior tackle Archie Lewis and senior center Mason Hampton were solid last season. The Broncos allowed 19 sacks last season, 12 fewer than in 2015. Boise State's tight end unit, which is seven deep, could be the X-factor after injuries and inexperience led to the group notching just 21 regular-season receptions.

DEFENSE The Broncos created just nine turnovers — two fumble recoveries and seven interceptions — last season, the fewest in school history. It taxed both sides of the ball, yet the defense still was No. 2 in the Mountain West in points allowed. The staff has implemented more aggressive concepts in the offseason, including more blitzes.

A key part of that is trust in a deep back end with four safeties who made at least one start last season, though interception leader Chanceller James (three) graduated. Junior cornerback Tyler Horton has shown plenty of promise and is now by far that group's most experienced member.

The linebackers lose three of their top five tacklers, in addition to Joe Martarano, who left the team in March to pursue a baseball career. Junior Leighton Vander Esch missed most of last season with injuries, but the former 8-man football high school star should be in for a big year at the weak-side spot.

Boise State led the nation with 17 sacks in the first four games but had only 12 in the final nine games, due in part to a defensive line that wore out as the season progressed. Two starters graduated, but junior David Moa (8.5 sacks) moves from an undersized nose tackle to defensive tackle, where he could be even more potent. Four first-year players who saw time in 2016 will have much larger roles this season.

SPECIALISTS At times, the Broncos were brutally bad on special teams, but they improved late in the year, especially after Wilson (13.2-yard average) took over as the punt returner. Gone is excellent punter Sean Wale and placekicker Tyler Rausa, with both roles likely to be filled by redshirt freshman Joel Velazquez.

FINAL ANALYSIS Bryan Harsin has won 31 games in three years as the head coach at his alma mater, but the Broncos' performance within the conference must improve. Boise State has played in the Mountain West Championship Game once in its four years of existence and is 4–5 in the last nine games against teams from its own division.

There is, however, still plenty of talent in the program. If Rypien can take a step forward and the offense can turn yards into points, Boise State should be in position to reclaim its spot as the premier program in the league.



BRETT RYPIEN

"No one is buying that they've fallen off. Even with San Diego State winning titles, Boise is still the program to beat on the field and off of it."
– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	1	Cedrick Wilson (Sr.)	81	Akilian Butler (Jr.)	
WR	8	Sean Modster (Jr.)	9	Bryan Jefferson (So.)	
WR	28	A.J. Richardson (Jr.)	18	Bubba Ogbebor (So.)	
LT	74	**Archie Lewis (Sr.)**	69	Austin Dixon (Fr.)	
LG	67	Garrett Larson (So.)	75	Isiah Moore (Jr.)	
C	59	**Mason Hampton (Sr.)**	52	Andrew Tercek (Sr.)	
RG	77	John Molchon (So.)	79	Eric Quevedo (So.)	
RT	76	Ezra Cleveland (Fr.)	78	Andres Preciado (Jr.)	
TE	88	Jake Roh (Sr.)	87	**Alec Dhaenens (Sr.)**	
QB	4	**Brett Rypien (Jr.)**	15	Jake Constantine (Fr.)	
RB	22	Alexander Mattison (So.)	30	Ryan Wolpin (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	91	Durrant Miles (Jr.)	93	Chase Hatada (So.)	
NT	98	Sonatane Lui (So.)	57	Emmanuel Fesili (So.)	
DT	55	**David Moa (Jr.)**	90	Daniel Auelua (Sr.)	
STUD	8	**Jabril Frazier (Jr.)**	53	Sam Whitney (So.)	
WLB	38	Leighton Vander Esch (Jr.)	36	Blake Whitlock (Sr.)	
MLB	58	Tyson Maeva (So.)	25	Benton Wickersham (Fr.)	
SLB	9	Desmond Williams (Fr.)	33	Gabe Perez (Sr.)	
CB	14	**Tyler Horton (Jr.)**	27	Reid Harrison-Ducros (So.)	
CB	6	Michael Young (Jr.)	30	Robert Lewis (Fr.)	
S	10	Kekoa Nawahine (So.)	37	**Cameron Hartsfield (Sr.)**	
S	4	DeAndre Pierce (So.)	15	Evan Tyler (So.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	46	Joel Velazquez (Fr.)	KR	1	Cedrick Wilson (Sr.)
P	46	Joel Velazquez (Fr.)	PR	1	Cedrick Wilson (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brett Rypien, 394-244-3,646-8, 24 TDs
Rushing: Alexander Mattison, 67 att., 328 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Cedrick Wilson, 56 rec., 1,129 yds., 11 TDs
Tackles: Cameron Hartsfield, 65
Sacks: David Moa, 8.5
Interceptions: Leighton Vander Esch, 1; Tyler Horton, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bryan Harsin
Record at School: 31-9 (3 years)
Career Record: 38-14 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Zak Hill
Defensive Coordinator: Andy Avalos
Boise, ID • Albertsons Stadium (36,387)

Boise State Athletics

COLORADO STATE RAMS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **58** • MW MOUNTAIN PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 6-2 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	26	Oregon State
Sept.	1	vs. Colorado #
Sept.	9	Abilene Christian
Sept.	16	at Alabama
Sept.	30	at Hawaii
Oct.	7	at Utah State
Oct.	14	Nevada
Oct.	21	at New Mexico
Oct.	28	Air Force
Nov.	4	at Wyoming
Nov.	11	Boise State
Nov.	18	San Jose State

#Denver, CO

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 5-3 MW

Sept.	2	vs. Colorado #	L	7-44
Sept.	10	UTSA	W	23-14
Sept.	17	Northern Colorado	W	47-21
Sept.	24	at Minnesota	L	24-31
Oct.	1	Wyoming	L	17-38
Oct.	8	Utah State	W	31-24
Oct.	15	at Boise State	L	23-28
Oct.	22	at UNLV	W	42-23
Nov.	5	Fresno State	W	37-0
Nov.	12	at Air Force	L	46-49
Nov.	19	New Mexico	W	49-31
Nov.	26	at San Diego State	W	63-31
Dec.	22	vs. Idaho %	L	50-61

#Denver %Potato Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Christian Cumber, CB, Denver, CO
2. Marcus McElroy, RB, Denver, CO
3. Ellison Hubbard, DT, Loganville, GA
4. Justice McCoy, QB, New Orleans, LA
5. Warren Jackson, WR, Mission Hills, CA
6. Scott Brooks, OG, Moorpark, CA
7. E.J. Scott, WR, Powder Springs, GA
8. Ben Knox, OL, DeLand, FL*
9. Griffin Hammer, TE, South Elgin, IL
10. Jadon Walker, CB, Lithia Springs, GA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.3 ppg	3	28
Rushing	217.8 ypg	5	31
Passing	244.7 ypg	2	55
Total	462.5 ypg	2	30
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.4 ppg	6	81
Rushing	214.0 ypg	8	98
Passing	205.2 ypg	5	32
Total	419.2 ypg	7	69
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	6	73

STAT CORNER

5.6/8.1

After a slow start, the Colorado State offense caught fire. The Rams averaged 5.6 yards per play in the first seven games, 8.1 in the last six.

OFFENSE Senior Nick Stevens was the best quarterback in the Mountain West after regaining the starting job midway through the 2016 season, after true freshman Collin Hill had gone down with a torn ACL. Stevens, who had thrown for 2,679 yards and 21 touchdowns as a sophomore in 2015, completed 119-of-173 passes for 1,859 yards with 19 TDs and three interceptions in the final seven games of the 2016 season while guiding the Rams to a fourth straight bowl game.

His top two receivers, seniors Michael Gallup (76 catches, 1,272 yards and 14 TDs) and Bisi Johnson (28, 613), are back as well. The Rams were remarkably balanced in 2016, averaging 217.8 rushing yards and 244.7 passing yards per game, and should be again with their top three running backs — senior Dalyn Dawkins (919 yards), junior Izzy Matthews (734) and sophomore Marvin Kinsey Jr. (546) — all returning. Kinsey could be slowed early while recovering from a torn ACL that kept him out of the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, and coach Mike Bobo might decide to redshirt both Hill and Kinsey this fall to give them additional time to recover.

Senior speedster Detrich Clark, a quarterback in high school and junior college, is a threat to score whenever he touches the ball, whether he's lined up as a receiver, running back or taking direct snaps in a Wildcat formation. He averaged 6.9 yards on 36 rushing attempts last season.

Two starters return on the offensive line, led by senior center Jake Bennett, the team's top NFL prospect.

DEFENSE The linebackers will once again be the strength of the CSU defense, with senior Deonte Clyburn capable of picking up where Kevin Davis, the leading tackler the past two seasons, left off. Clyburn was one of the Rams' top defenders in 2015 but had to sit out last year because of blood clots. Juniors Josh Watson and Tre Thomas and senior Evan Colorito (10 tackles for a loss) return at the other three linebacker spots in the Rams' 3-4 scheme.

Safety Jake Schlager and cornerback Kevin Nutt Jr., both seniors, anchor the secondary, and an undersized defensive line should get some needed help from 6'3", 335-pound nose tackle Christian Colon, a freshman who redshirted last season.

A young and inexperienced defense had its ups and downs throughout the 2016 season. The Rams recorded the school's first shutout in 20 years in an early-November win over Fresno State but then gave up 31 points or more in their final four games — including 61 in the bowl game to Idaho.

Several young players who finished strong, including safety Jamal Hicks, pass-rushing linebacker Arjay Jean and cornerback Robert Awunganyi, should play key roles.

SPECIALISTS CSU lost one of the nation's top punters to graduation in Hayden Hunt and is counting on true freshman Ryan Stonehouse, rated the No. 1 punting prospect in the country by 247Sports, to fill the void. Junior Wyatt Bryan has made 27-of-36 field goals the past two seasons with only three misses from inside 40 yards. Clark is back to return kickoffs.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Rams should contend for a fifth straight bowl appearance and challenge Boise State for the Mountain West's Mountain Division title. The high-powered offense should put up plenty of points, but a defense that still has holes on the line and in the secondary is likely to give up plenty of points, too.

Three of the biggest games of the season fall in the first four weeks — against Oregon State to open Colorado State's new on-campus stadium, vs. Colorado in Denver and at Alabama.



MICHAEL GALLUP

"Look for Mike Bobo's recruiting in the Southeast to really start showing up on the field. They have stepped up their caliber of athlete."

– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	4	**Michael Gallup (Sr.)**	27	Trey Smith (Jr.)
WR	81	**Bisi Johnson (Jr.)**		Warren Jackson (Fr.)
WR	8	Detrich Clark (Sr.)	23	Marcus Wilson (Jr.)
LT	60	Trae Moxley (Sr.)	78	Ben Knox (Jr.)
LG	51	Colby Meeks (Jr.)	73	Tyler Bjorklund (Jr.)
C	77	**Jake Bennett (Sr.)**	51	Colby Meeks (Jr.)
RG	71	Jeff Taylor (So.)	72	Nicho Garcia (Jr.)
RT	61	**Zack Golditch (Sr.)**	74	Salofi Gaoa (So.)
TE	30	Dalton Fackrell (Sr.)	88	Griffin Hammer (Fr.)
QB	7	Nick Stevens (Sr.)	15	Collin Hill (So.)
RB	1	**Dalyn Dawkins (Sr.)**	35	Izzy Matthews (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	94	**Darnell Thompson (Sr.)**	95	Richard King (So.)
NT	4	Christian Colon (Fr.)	99	Colton Foster (So.)
DT	91	**Jakob Buys (Sr.)**	97	Toby McBride (So.)
OLB	43	**Evan Colorito (Sr.)**	54	Arjay Jean (So.)
WLB	12	Deonte Clyburn (Sr.)	31	Max McDonald (So.)
MLB	55	**Josh Watson (Jr.)**	42	Patrick Elsenbast (Sr.)
SLB	52	**Tre Thomas (Jr.)**	15	Kiel Robinson (Sr.)
CB	10	**Kevin Nutt Jr. (Sr.)**	17	Shun Johnson (Sr.)
CB	2	Robert Awunganyi (So.)	14	Anthony Hawkins (So.)
SS	8	**Jake Schlager (Sr.)**	29	Justin Sweet (Sr.)
FS	20	Jamal Hicks (So.)	18	**Braylin Scott (Jr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	96	Wyatt Bryan (Jr.)	KR	8 Detrich Clark (Sr.)
P		Ryan Stonehouse (Fr.)	PR	10 Kevin Nutt Jr. (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nick Stevens, 201-129-1,936-5, 19 TDs
Rushing: Dalyn Dawkins, 161 att., 919 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Michael Gallup, 76 rec., 1,272 yds., 14 TDs
Tackles: Josh Watson, 90
Sacks: Toby McBride, 4.0
Interceptions: Braylin Scott, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Bobo
Record at School: 14-12 (2 years)
Career Record: 14-12 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Will Friend
Defensive Coordinator: Marty English
Fort Collins, CO • Colorado State Stadium (41,200)

Colorado State/Abbie Parr

NEW MEXICO LOBOS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **96** • MW MOUNTAIN PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-4**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Abilene Christian
Sept.	9	New Mexico State
Sept.	16	at Boise State
Sept.	23	at Tulsa
Sept.	30	Air Force
Oct.	14	at Fresno State
Oct.	21	Colorado State
Oct.	28	at Wyoming
Nov.	4	Utah State
Nov.	11	at Texas A&M
Nov.	18	UNLV
Nov.	25	at San Diego State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 6-2 MW

Sept.	1	South Dakota	W	48-21
Sept.	10	at New Mexico State	L	31-32
Sept.	17	at Rutgers	L	28-37
Oct.	1	San Jose State	W	48-41
Oct.	7	Boise State	L	21-49
Oct.	15	vs. Air Force #	W	45-40
Oct.	22	ULM	W	59-17
Oct.	29	at Hawaii	W	28-21
Nov.	5	Nevada	W	35-26
Nov.	12	at Utah State	W	24-21
Nov.	19	at Colorado State	L	31-49
Nov.	26	Wyoming	W	56-35
Dec.	17	vs. UTSA %	W	23-20

#Dallas %New Mexico Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Cameron Burston, QB, Vallejo, CA*
2. Nico Bolden, DB, Woodbury, MN
3. Dylan Weaver, OL, Farmington, NM
4. Willie Hobdy, DB, Garland, TX*
5. Marcus Hayes, DB, Rockford, IL
6. Jalin Burrell, DB, Riverside, CA*
7. Bryson Carroll, QB, San Antonio, TX
8. Jordan Flack, LB, Newbury Park, CA*
9. Langston Murray, DL, Logansport, LA
10. Daniel Peabody, TE, Tucson, AZ

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.7 ppg	1	23
Rushing	350.0 ypg	1	1
Passing	106.8 ypg	12	127
Total	456.8 ypg	3	33
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.5 ppg	8	89
Rushing	172.5 ypg	3	65
Passing	222.3 ypg	8	59
Total	394.8 ypg	5	56
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	6	73

STAT CORNER

9.9

A clear identity: New Mexico averaged 9.9 rushes of 10-plus yards per game (most in FBS) but only 4.5 such passes (125th).

OFFENSE This could finally be the year New Mexico sheds the two-quarterback system that has been in place since coach Bob Davie's arrival in 2012. Senior Lamar Jordan, who has been involved in a platoon since his redshirt freshman year in 2014, enters this season as the man. With Jordan at the controls for most of last season, the Lobos led the nation in rushing and return five of their six leading rushers from a year ago, including Tyrone Owens, who had 1,097 yards. UNM loses Teriyon Gipson and his 1,269 rushing yards, but Romell Jordan, who missed 2016 with a knee injury, and Coltin Gerhart, a tailback/quarterback and the brother of Stanford All-American Toby Gerhart, should help fill the void.

So much for the fear Davie had last year that opponents had figured out the Lobos' triple-option. Lamar Jordan rushed for 749 yards on a 6.5-yard average and also improved his passing over the course of the season. The sample size is small — New Mexico attempted fewer passes than all but four teams last season — but Jordan completed 7-of-9 attempts for 199 yards in the final two games of the 2016 season.

Jordan will have a big-time weapon in the passing game. Delane Hart-Johnson returns in 2017 after suffering broken vertebrae from a car accident in May 2016. The 6'4" Hart-Johnson, who runs a 4.6 40, headlines a unit that has a lot of playing experience.

UNM has four offensive linemen returning with ample experience but must fill a void at left tackle. Still, the experience should help an offense that led the nation with 129 runs of 10-plus yards last season. Among the starters is another brother of a famous athlete — Avery Jordan is the brother of Los Angeles Clippers center DeAndre.

DEFENSE Fourth-year defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove has transformed a unit that gave up 516.2 yards per game in the season before he ascended to coordinator to one that allowed 394.8 yards last season. UNM, however, returns just three starters — defensive end Garrett Hughes, outside linebacker Kimmie Carson (who missed the spring to focus on academics) and nickel back Jake Rothschiller.

Davie says his new starters could be more physically talented than the players they're replacing. Senior Kene Okonkwo and junior Cody Baker bring more experience to the defensive line, but the Lobos are high on Teton Saltes, a 6'4", 264-pound redshirt freshman from Albuquerque.

Senior outside linebacker Austin Ocasio and junior inside linebacker Alex Hart step into bigger roles as front-of-the-rotation players, and UNM also has big hopes for redshirt freshman Rhashaun Epting.

UNM has question marks in the secondary. Safety Bijon Parker and cornerback Jadon Boatright are veterans. The Rothschiller brothers, Jake and Kyle, bring a lot of energy to the safety spot, and dynamic athlete Elijah Lilly could become a key part of the cornerback rotation.

SPECIALISTS This is the strength of the team. Placekicker Jason Sanders (12-of-13 on field goal attempts), punter Corey Bojorquez (a 47.3-yard average over his last six regular-season games), kick returner Lilly (a 27.4-yard average with one TD) and punt returner Chris Davis (6.8-yard average) all return.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Lobos are replacing several players from a 9–4 squad, including a key group of seniors who helped elevate the program. Davie dipped into the junior college ranks to help fill the void. How well the new players fill the depth chart, especially on defense, could determine whether or not UNM can remain in the upper echelon of the Mountain Division. Boise State appears to be the team to beat, but the race for second place should be tight.



GARRETT HUGHES

"They're the last team you want to see. They can absolutely wear you out. Bob Davie deserves a huge amount of credit."

– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

		OFFENSE (8)		
WR	2	Delane Hart-Johnson (Jr.)	19	**Matt Quarrells (Jr.)**
WR	5	**Patrick Reed (Jr.)**	9	Q' Drennan (So)
LT	72	**Avery Jordan (Sr.)**	56	Taylor Lindley (So.)
LG	74	Ray Baylor III (Sr.)	65	Nick Iacovangelo (So.)
C	59	**Blaise Fountain (So.)**	69	Beau Hott (So.)
RG	55	**Aaron Jenkins (Jr.)**	71	Kameron Smith (Fr.)
RT	77	**Charlie Grammel (So.)**	70	Jonathan Brys (Fr.)
TE	89	Dyson Chmura (So.)	84	Erik Beilman (So.)
QB	13	**Lamar Jordan (Sr.)**		Cameron Burston (Jr.)
RB	25	**Tyrone Owens (So.)**	20	Daryl Chestnut (Sr.)
RB	3	Richard McQuarley (Sr.)	6	Diquon Woodhouse (Jr.)
		DEFENSE (3)		
DE	53	Cody Baker (Jr.)	90	Ewing Simmons (Sr.)
NT	96	Johnny Williams (Sr.)	92	Jermaine Conyers (Jr.)
DT	95	**Garrett Hughes (Sr.)**	98	Kene Okonkwo (Sr.)
OLB	47	Austin Ocasio (Sr.)	29	Jordan Flack (Jr.)
MLB	33	Alex Hart (Jr.)	45	Evahelotu Tohi (Jr.)
OLB	2	**Kimmie Carson (Sr.)**	99	Rhashaun Epting (Fr.)
CB	3	D'Angelo Ross (Jr.)	7	Blair Manley (So.)
CB	8	Willy Hobdy (So.)	19	Elijah Lilly (So.)
NB	11	Jadon Boatright (Sr.)	28	**Jake Rothschiller (Sr.)**
S	4	Bijon Parker (Jr.)	16	Jacob Girgle (Sr.)
S	9	Stanley Barnwell (Jr.)	32	Kyle Rothschiller (Sr.)
		SPECIAL TEAMS		
K	95	Jason Sanders (Sr.)	KR	19 Elijah Lilly (So.)
P	30	Corey Bojorquez (Sr.)	PR	18 Chris Davis (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Lamar Jordan, 75-40-681-4, 6 TDs
Rushing: Tyrone Owens, 137 att., 1,097 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Patrick Reed, 14 rec., 237 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Kimmie Carson, 58
Sacks: Garrett Hughes, 6.5
Interceptions: Austin Ocasio, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bob Davie
Record at School: 27-36 (5 years)
Career Record: 62-61 (10 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Bob DeBesse
Defensive Coordinator: Kevin Cosgrove
Albuquerque, NM • University Stadium (39,224)

University of New Mexico Athletics

UTAH STATE AGGIES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **97** • MW MOUNTAIN PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 3-5 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	at Wisconsin
Sept.	7	Idaho State
Sept.	16	at Wake Forest
Sept.	23	at San Jose State
Sept.	29	BYU
Oct.	7	Colorado State
Oct.	14	Wyoming
Oct.	21	at UNLV
Oct.	28	Boise State
Nov.	4	at New Mexico
Nov.	18	Hawaii
Nov.	25	at Air Force

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 1-7 MW

Sept.	1	Weber State	W	45-6
Sept.	10	at USC	L	7-45
Sept.	16	Arkansas State	W	34-20
Sept.	24	Air Force	L	20-27
Oct.	1	at Boise State	L	10-21
Oct.	8	at Colorado State	L	24-31
Oct.	22	Fresno State	W	38-20
Oct.	28	San Diego State	L	13-40
Nov.	5	at Wyoming	L	28-52
Nov.	12	New Mexico	L	21-24
Nov.	19	at Nevada	L	37-38
Nov.	26	at BYU	L	10-28

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Carson Terrell, TE, Lehi, UT
2. Savon Scarver, WR, Las Vegas, NV
3. Henry Colombi, QB, Hollywood, FL
4. Deante Fortenberry, CB, Oakland, CA*
5. Alfred Edwards, OL, Redlands, CA
6. Jamaal Evans, ATH, Las Vegas, NV
7. Robert Castaneda, OL, Round Rock, TX*
8. Zahodri Jackson, DB, Sarasota, FL
9. Louy Compton, LB, Waterford, MI*
10. Jarrod Green, CB, Elk Grove, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.9 ppg	11	108
Rushing	170.5 ypg	9	69
Passing	205.8 ypg	8	93
Total	376.3 ypg	11	96
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.3 ppg	5	73
Rushing	203.3 ypg	6	91
Passing	176.5 ypg	3	11
Total	379.8 ypg	3	44
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

3

The Aggies slumped to three wins in 2016, the fewest for the program since Brent Guy's final Utah State team went 3-9 in 2008.

OFFENSE Developing an offensive line will be vital after losing four starters, three of whom had earned All-Mountain West honors during their careers. Veteran quarterback Kent Myers is back, but he needs better protection. Three junior college linemen will be counted on, along with returners Preston Brooksby and KJ Uluave.

The Aggies rushed for more than 2,000 yards as a team for the eighth straight season. Running back Tonny Lindsey Jr. filled in for injured Devante Mays and rushed for 763 yards, while Myers picked up 449 yards on the ground to go with his 2,389 yards passing. Running backs LaJuan Hunt and Justen Hervey have seen action and will add punch to the rushing attack, as will junior college transfer Eltoro Allen.

New offensive coordinator David Yost will tweak the attack some by speeding up play and opening up the pass game.

"Our passing game is going to be simpler," coach Matt Wells says. "We are going to play with more tempo and hopefully more efficiency, possessions and points. ... We have a lot of game experience back at receiver. We are going to play a lot of receivers in this offense."

All-league tight end Wyatt Houston is gone, but Dax Raymond has coaches excited. Wide receivers Rayshad Lewis, Ron'quavion Tarver, Braelon Roberts and Jaren Colston-Green give Myers plenty of targets. Quarterback Damion Hobbs has moved to tight end.

DEFENSE Like the trenches on offense, the Aggies' D is going through some rebuilding up front as three starters are gone, along with two starting linebackers. The top three tacklers from a year ago have moved on.

"Overall, I think we are very talented in the secondary and at outside linebacker," Wells says. "The focus is the defensive line."

Safety Dallin Leavitt made an immediate impact last season after transferring from BYU. He is the leading tackler back with 57 and also led the team in interceptions with three. He missed several games because of injury in 2016.

"He (Leavitt) is one of the best safeties in the Mountain West," Wells says. "He is smart, gets us lined up, has the ability to blitz, great open-field tackler and an emotional leader."

Cornerback Jalen Davis has started all 35 games he has played in. Safety Jontrell Rocquermore also brings experience to the secondary. Alex Huerta and Derek Larsen will anchor the linebacking corps.

Another focus of the defense: creating turnovers. The Aggies had just 10 in 2016. Only three teams had fewer.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Dominik Eberle made 3-of-5 field goal attempts as a freshman. He will be pushed in preseason camp. The Aggies ranked 125th in the nation in net punting in 2016 with a 33.4-yard average. That needs to improve.

FINAL ANALYSIS USU's streak of five straight seasons with at least six wins and a trip to a bowl game ended last season with a 3–9 thud. The Aggies couldn't close out games, suffering five Mountain West losses by a combined 29 points. Several of those setbacks came after leading by double digits in the second half.

The Mountain Division is by far the tougher of the two sides in the Mountain West, so the Aggies will have to be quite a bit better to make a significant move in the standings. The non-conference schedule is tough — with trips to Wisconsin and Wake Forest to go along with a home date vs. BYU — but Utah State catches a break by playing San Jose State and UNLV from the West Division. Still, getting to six wins will be a challenge.



KENT MYERS

"2016 wasn't what you'd expect from Matt Wells. That's a football team more talented and just plain better than its record."

– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	19	Ron'quavion Tarver (Jr.)	17	Zach Van Leeuwen (Jr.)	
WR	**9**	**Rayshad Lewis (So.)**	25	Gerald Bright (So.)	
WR	5	Jaren Colston-Green (Sr.)	88	Braelon Roberts (Sr.)	
LT	62	Roman Andrus (Jr.)	78	Cody Boyer (Jr.)	
LG	58	Demytrick Ali'ifua (Fr.)	75	Ty Shaw (Fr.)	
C	63	Quin Ficklin (Jr.)	69	Roderick Smith II (So.)	
RG	66	KJ Uluave (Jr.)	70	Rob Castandea (Jr.)	
RT	**73**	**Preston Brooksby (Sr.)**	52	Sean Taylor (Jr.)	
TE	87	Dax Raymond (So.)	11	Damion Hobbs (Sr.)	
QB	**2**	**Kent Myers (Sr.)**	10	Jordan Love (Fr.)	
RB	**4**	**Tonny Lindsey Jr. (Sr.)**	21	LaJuan Hunt (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	55	Adewale Adeoye (Jr.)	93	Jacoby Wildman (So.)
NG	56	Gasetoto Schuster (Jr.)	96	Christopher 'Unga (So.)
DE	19	Ian Togiai (Sr.)	47	Logan Lee (Fr.)
OLB	**49**	**Derek Larsen (Jr.)**	24	Dalton Baker (So.)
ILB	48	Chase Christiansen (Jr.)	33	Kevin Meitzenheimer (Fr.)
ILB	**12**	**Alex Huerta (Sr.)**	10	Chasen Andersen (Jr.)
OLB	51	Justus Te'i (So.)	11	David Woodward (Fr.)
CB	**13**	**Jalen Davis (Sr.)**	6	Cameron Haney (So.)
CB	8	Wesley Bailey (Sr.)	36	Ja'Marcus Ingram (Fr.)
SS	**2**	**Dallin Leavitt (Sr.)**	32	Braxton Gunther (Fr.)
FS	23	Gaje Ferguson (Jr.)	27	Jontrell Rocquermore (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	62	Dominik Eberle (So.)	KR	34	Justen Hervey (Jr.)
P	89	Aaron Dalton (Jr.)	PR	9	Rayshad Lewis (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kent Myers, 361-211-2,389-8, 10 TDs
Rushing: Tonny Lindsey Jr., 148 att., 763 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Ron'Quavion Tarver, 46 rec., 602 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Dallin Leavitt, 57
Sacks: Three players tied with 2.0
Interceptions: Dallin Leavitt, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Matt Wells
Record at School: 28-25 (4 years)
Career Record: 28-25 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: David Yost
Defensive Coordinators: Frank Maile, Kendrick Shaver
Logan, UT • Maverik Stadium (25,513)

Utah State Media Relations

WYOMING COWBOYS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **72** • MW MOUNTAIN PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Iowa	
Sept. 9	Gardner-Webb	
Sept. 16	Oregon	
Sept. 23	Hawaii	
Sept. 30	Texas State	
Oct. 14	at Utah State	
Oct. 21	at Boise State	
Oct. 28	New Mexico	
Nov. 4	Colorado State	
Nov. 11	at Air Force	
Nov. 18	Fresno State	
Nov. 25	at San Jose State	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-6, 6-2 MW

Sept. 3	Northern Illinois (ot)		W	40-34
Sept. 10	at Nebraska		L	17-52
Sept. 17	UC Davis		W	45-22
Sept. 23	at Eastern Michigan		L	24-27
Oct. 1	at Colorado State		W	38-17
Oct. 8	Air Force		W	35-26
Oct. 22	at Nevada		W	42-34
Oct. 29	Boise State		W	30-28
Nov. 5	Utah State		W	52-28
Nov. 12	at UNLV	(ot)	L	66-69
Nov. 19	San Diego State		W	34-33
Nov. 26	New Mexico		L	35-56
Dec. 3	San Diego State #		L	24-27
Dec. 21	vs. BYU %		L	21-24

#MW Championship %Poinsettia Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Victor Jones, DE, Sacramento, CA
2. Ryan Gatoloai-Faupula, LB, Sacramento, CA
3. Jared Scott, WR, Oak Park, IL
4. C.J. Coldon, CB, Belleville, IL
5. Tyler Vander Waal, QB, Elk Grove, CA
6. Alonzo Velazquez, OL, Janesville, WI
7. Gavin Dunayski, DL, Puyallup, WA
8. Davon Wells-Ross, LB, Omaha, NE
9. Rudy Stofer, OL, Kearney, NE
10. Avante' Cox, WR, Rochester, IL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.9 ppg	2	25
Rushing	205.4 ypg	6	36
Passing	229.1 ypg	3	67
Total	434.5 ypg	5	48
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	34.1 ppg	9	101
Rushing	203.6 ypg	7	92
Passing	249.5 ypg	11	88
Total	453.1 ypg	10	104
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.21	4	46

STAT CORNER

7.3

Craig Bohl's next step in the Wyoming rebuild: defense. The Cowboys allowed 7.3 yards per play on first down, 125th in FBS.

OFFENSE Josh Allen made a huge splash in his first full season as the Cowboys' starting quarterback. The 6'5", 230-pound Allen completed 56 percent of his passes for 3,203 yards with 28 touchdowns and 15 interceptions and was the team's second-leading rusher with 523 yards and seven TDs. Allen toyed with the idea of turning pro but decided to come back to Laramie to hone his skills while trying to lead UW to its first back-to-back bowl berths since 1987-88. He could be a first-round pick in 2018.

Allen will have a lot of new weapons around him as Wyoming lost its career rushing leader — Brian Hill ranked third nationally with 1,860 yards on the ground — and top three pass catchers from 2016. There could be a three-headed monster at running back consisting of junior Nico Evans and sophomores Kellen Overstreet and Milo Hall. The top returning wide receiver is sophomore C.J. Johnson, who caught 21 passes for 304 yards and three touchdowns last season.

The offensive line must replace all-conference center Chase Roullier. Sophomore Gavin Rush was moved over from guard.

DEFENSE Wyoming returns nine starters from a unit that allowed 34.1 points and 453.1 yards per game and struggled more as the season progressed. Coaches hope that the experienced returning players, along with new defensive coordinator Scottie Hazelton, will give the Cowboys a boost in overall performance and consistency.

The Cowboys lose only one defensive lineman, but a key will be the health of junior end Carl Granderson, a disruptive force at 6'5", 243 pounds who tore an ACL in the sixth game last season.

Logan Wilson, an in-state product from Casper, was the Mountain West Freshman of the Year as an outside linebacker last season but was moved to middle linebacker in the spring and has adapted well. Sophomore Cassh Maluia replaces Wilson at one outside linebacker spot. UCLA transfer Jalen Ortiz is the favorite to play on the other side.

Wyoming returns its entire secondary, which is anchored by safeties Andrew Wingard and Marcus Epps. Wingard earned first-team All-MW honors last season and Freshman All-America honors in 2015. Combined, Wingard and Epps have 447 tackles and eight interceptions.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Cooper Rothe made 13-of-20 field goals last season as a true freshman, including seven of his last eight. Wyoming must replace two four-year starters in punter Ethan Wood and long snapper Brendan Turelli. True freshman punter Tim Zaleski and graduate transfer long snapper Kolton Donovan from Southern Utah are expected to fill those spots. Sophomore wide receiver Austin Conway led the Cowboys with 31 punt returns last season, including one for a touchdown. Conway originally signed with Wyoming to play basketball but switched to football last spring. Conway also could return kickoffs along with Evans and cornerback Rico Gafford.

FINAL ANALYSIS Wyoming was picked last in the Mountain Division of the Mountain West last season but ended up in a three-way tie for first and played in the league title game.

The offense will be formidable once again, but Allen still has to improve while making those around him better. One thing Wyoming did well defensively last season was force turnovers (27 compared to 10 in 2015). But it must cut down on points and yards allowed per game. Hazelton figures to mix coverages in the secondary, which should take pressure off the Cowboys' corners, who played exclusively man last season. If Allen has a big season and the defense improves, Wyoming will be in the hunt for another division title.



JOSH ALLEN

"(They) had a strong season last year, but there's extra difficulty putting back-to-back winning seasons together in a program like that."
– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	14	C.J. Johnson (So.)	13	John Okwoli (So.)
WR	25	Austin Conway (So.)	80	James Price (Jr.)
LT	**72**	**Zach Wallace (Jr.)**	77	Pahl Schwab (So.)
LG	71	Jace Webb (Fr.)	67	Cole Turner (Jr.)
C	**55**	**Gavin Rush (So.)**	67	Cole Turner (Jr.)
RG	**61**	**Kaden Jackson (Jr.)**		Patrick Arnold (Fr.)
RT	**59**	**Ryan Cummings (Sr.)**	**74**	**Brinkley Jolly (Jr.)**
TE	33	Josh Harshman (Jr.)	85	Tyree Mayfield (Jr.)
QB	**17**	**Josh Allen (Jr.)**	15	Nick Smith (Jr.)
RB	29	Kellen Overstreet (So.)	22	Nico Evans (Jr.)
FB	36	Drew Van Maanen (Sr.)	30	Jayton Watson (So.)

DEFENSE (9)

DE	**91**	**Carl Granderson (Jr.)**	**53**	**Josiah Hall (So.)**
DT	93	Youhanna Ghaifan (So.)	99	Brent Gilliland (So.)
NT	**87**	**Conner Cain (Jr.)**	96	Sidney Malauula (Jr.)
DE	**42**	**Kevin Prosser (Jr.)**	58	Taniela Lolohea (Sr.)
OLB	46	Cassh Maluia (So.)	32	Adam Pilapil (Jr.)
MLB	**30**	**Logan Wilson (So.)**	52	Jahmari Moore (Fr.)
OLB	8	Jalen Ortiz (Sr.)	31	Chavez Pownell Jr. (Jr.)
CB	9	Tyler Hall (So.)	**21**	**Antonio Hull (Jr.)**
CB	**5**	**Rico Gafford (Sr.)**	2	Robert Priester (Sr.)
S	**28**	**Andrew Wingard (Jr.)**	3	Alijah Halliburton (So.)
S	**6**	**Marcus Epps (Jr.)**	20	Josh Boyd (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	40	Cooper Rothe (So.)	KR	5	Rico Gafford (Sr.)
P		Tim Zaleski (Fr.)	PR	25	Austin Conway (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Josh Allen, 373-209-3,203-15, 28 TDs
Rushing: Josh Allen, 142 att., 523 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: C.J. Johnson, 21 rec., 304 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Andrew Wingard, 131
Sacks: Kevin Prosser, 6.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Craig Bohl
Record at School: 14-24 (3 years)
Career Record: 118-56 (14 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brent Vigen
Defensive Coordinator: Scottie Hazelton
Laramie, WY • War Memorial Stadium (29,181)

Troy Babbitt

FRESNO STATE BULLDOGS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **117** • MW WEST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Incarnate Word
Sept.	9	at Alabama
Sept.	16	at Washington
Sept.	30	Nevada
Oct.	7	at San Jose State
Oct.	14	New Mexico
Oct.	21	at San Diego State
Oct.	28	UNLV
Nov.	4	BYU
Nov.	11	at Hawaii
Nov.	18	at Wyoming
Nov.	25	Boise State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 1-11, 0-8 MW

Sept.	3	at Nebraska	L	10-43
Sept.	10	Sacramento State	W	31-3
Sept.	17	at Toledo	L	17-52
Sept.	24	Tulsa	(ot) L	41-48
Oct.	1	at UNLV	L	20-45
Oct.	8	at Nevada	L	22-27
Oct.	14	San Diego State	L	3-17
Oct.	22	at Utah State	L	20-38
Oct.	28	Air Force	L	21-31
Nov.	5	at Colorado State	L	0-37
Nov.	19	Hawaii	L	13-14
Nov.	26	San Jose State	L	14-16

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Derrion Grim, WR, Stockton, CA*
2. Wylan Free, DB, Compton, CA
3. T.J. Mauga, DL, Fallon, NV
4. Zelan Tupuola, OL, Carson, CA
5. Daniel Moraga, ATH, Oxnard, CA
6. Richard Cage, LB, Corona, CA
7. Jorge Reyna, QB, Downey, CA*
8. Syrus Tuitele, O, Chico, CA
9. Matt Boateng, DB, Ajax, Ontario, Canada*
10. Zane Pope, ATH, Moorpark, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	17.7 ppg	12	125
Rushing	116.2 ypg	12	119
Passing	213.1 ypg	6	84
Total	329.3 ypg	12	120
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.9 ppg	7	83
Rushing	247.4 ypg	11	123
Passing	167.7 ypg	2	5
Total	415.1 ypg	6	68
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
-9	-0.75	12	117

STAT CORNER

4.4

Fresno State averaged just 4.4 yards per play on first down, easily the worst in FBS. Nothing like starting every drive in a hole.

OFFENSE With apologies to anyone who witnessed 1929 (1–7) or 1944 (0–6), 2016 will go down as the worst season in Fresno State football history. Which is why Tim DeRuyter got the boot midseason and Fresno State wasted little time welcoming back alumnus Jeff Tedford as head coach.

"It needs to start with a foundation," says Tedford, who also inherited a one-win team at Cal in 2002. "Fundamentals. Techniques. Competitiveness. Standards on which we do things. Besides the evaluation of players and implementing our systems, there are a lot of other things that we want to make sure we're teaching."

Despite his history as a quarterback developer, Tedford looked beyond his normal circle for an offensive coordinator. Kalen DeBoer comes to the San Joaquin Valley after turning Eastern Michigan's outfit from hapless to respectable, and Tedford has given him responsibility for designing schemes and calling plays.

Chason Virgil took his lumps last fall and made some mistakes, but the sophomore didn't get much help from the running game. Although Virgil is the only quarterback who has taken an FBS snap, Tedford and DeBoer still want to get a long look at junior college transfer Jorge Reyna and redshirt freshman James Quentin Davis. Tellingly, the most impressive lineman in the spring was redshirt freshman Netane Muti — not one of the four returning starters.

With KeeSean Johnson, who added strength during the offseason, big-play threat Jamire Jordan and physical slot man Da'Mari Scott (ineligible in 2016), receiver is the strongest and most proven position group. But when the offense is always in third-and-long and you have an inexperienced QB, as has been the case lately, those weapons tend to be less effective.

DEFENSE Tedford went further afield for a defensive coordinator, importing Orlondo Steinauer from north of the border. Steinauer spent the last four seasons with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, where his units consistently ranked among the CFL's best in takeaways and sacks. The challenge for Steinhauer won't be learning to deal with 11 players and four downs. It'll be stamping an aggressive, disruptive mindset on players who have gotten used to being passive.

The 3-4 that Fresno State ran under DeRuyter has been replaced by a 4-3, which Steinauer promises will be "multiple." Seniors Malik Forrester and Nate Madsen are the stalwarts in the interior line, while junior linebackers Nela Otukolo and James Bailey both possess all-conference ability. One glaring question: Who's going to rush the passer?

The secondary is more of a grab bag. Only one starter returns (junior DeShawn Potts), but there's no guarantee he'll be in that spot come September.

Another change: a low-shoulder tackling style. The idea is not only to reduce the likelihood of head injuries but also to increase the number of forced fumbles.

SPECIALISTS Kody Kroening made 15 straight field goals in 2016, the nation's longest streak. Number 16, though, was blocked by Hawaii as time expired and cost the Bulldogs a second win. Kroening, punter Blake Cusick and return specialist Scott are the key pieces for special teams coach Jamie Christian.

FINAL ANALYSIS Tedford got a five-year contract with huge performance bonuses and rollovers that could make it an eight-year deal. In other words, plenty of time to clean up this mess. He'll need it after inheriting a roster with few returning standouts, low scholarship numbers and a losing culture. Tedford has resurrected lifeless programs before, but Fresno State's rugged noniconference schedule (Alabama, Washington, BYU) likely means .500 is at least a year away.



CHASON VIRGIL

"It's a mess right now. This is a program we need to be more competitive for the entire conference to earn respect nationally."

– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	3	**KeeSean Johnson (Jr.)**	87	Namani Parker (Jr.)
WR	1	**Jamire Jordan (Jr.)**	6	Delvon Hardaway (Sr.)
WR	8	Da'Mari Scott (Sr.)	85	Jordan Washington (Jr.)
LT	58	**Christian Cronk (Jr.)**	74	Ryan Popolizio (Sr.)
LG	52	Netane Muti (Fr.)	66	Quireo Woodley (So.)
C	77	**Aaron Mitchell (Jr.)**	62	Logan Hughes (Jr.)
RG	73	**Micah St. Andrew (Jr.)**	76	Shane Gama (Jr.)
RT	78	**David Patterson (Sr.)**	70	Zack Kinninger (So.)
TE	89	**Kyle Riddering (Jr.)**	16	Jared Rice (So.)
QB	5	**Chason Virgil (So.)**	10	Jorge Reyna (Jr.)
RB	24	Saevion Johnson (Fr.)	28	**Dontel James (Sr.)**

DEFENSE (6)

DE	56	**Tobenna Okeke (Sr.)**	40	Justin Green (Sr.)
DT	91	**Nathan Madsen (Sr.)**	58	Elijah Piper (So.)
NT	97	**Malik Forrester (Sr.)**	94	Patrick Belony (Jr.)
DE	17	Austin Vaimili (Sr.)	44	Stephen Van Hook (Sr.)
OLB	32	**Robert Stanley (Sr.)**	22	Trent Soechting (Jr.)
MLB	10	Nela Otukolo (Jr.)	24	Jeffrey Allison (So.)
SLB	7	**James Bailey (Jr.)**	30	Messiah Tyler (So.)
CB	23	Juju Hughes (So.)	26	Matt Boateng (Jr.)
CB	38	Jaron Bryant (So.)	6	Anthoula Kelly (Jr.)
SS	2	**DeShawn Potts (Jr.)**	29	Justin Rice (So.)
FS	4	Mike Bell (So.)	39	Jackson Finch (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	48	Kody Kroening (Sr.)	KR	8	Da'Mari Scott (Sr.)
P	47	Blake Cusick (So.)	PR	11	Dejonte O'Neal (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chason Virgil, 322-166-2,021-10, 13 TDs
Rushing: Dontel James, 208 att., 697 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: KeeSean Johnson, 66 rec. 773 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: James Bailey, 59
Sacks: Tobenna Okeke, 2.5
Interceptions: None

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jeff Tedford
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 82-57 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kalen DeBoer
Defensive Coordinator: Orlondo Steinauer
Fresno, CA • Bulldog Stadium (41,031)

Fresno State Athletics

HAWAII RAINBOW WARRIORS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **88** • MW WEST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-3 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	26	at Massachusetts
Sept.	2	Western Carolina
Sept.	9	at UCLA
Sept.	23	at Wyoming
Sept.	30	Colorado State
Oct.	7	at Nevada
Oct.	14	San Jose State
Oct.	28	San Diego State
Nov.	4	at UNLV
Nov.	11	Fresno State
Nov.	18	at Utah State
Nov.	25	BYU

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-7, 4-4 MW

Aug.	26	vs. California #	L	31-51
Sept.	3	at Michigan	L	3-63
Sept.	10	UT Martin	W	41-36
Sept.	17	at Arizona	L	28-47
Oct.	1	Nevada	W	38-17
Oct.	8	at San Jose State	W	34-17
Oct.	15	UNLV	L	38-41
Oct.	22	at Air Force [ot]	W	34-27
Oct.	29	New Mexico	L	21-28
Nov.	5	at San Diego State	L	0-55
Nov.	12	Boise State	L	16-52
Nov.	19	at Fresno State	W	14-13
Nov.	26	Massachusetts	W	46-40
Dec.	24	vs. Middle Tennessee $	W	52-35

#Sydney, Australia $Hawaii Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jamie Tago, DE, Pago Pago, American Samoa*
2. Blessman Ta'ala, DL, Faga'itua, American Samoa
3. Hekili Keliiliki, RB, Bentonville, AR
4. Paul Scott, LB, Oakland, CA
5. Donovan Dalton, DB, Scottsdale, AZ
6. Kade Greeley, TE, Murrieta, CA
7. Anthony Mermea, DL, Murrieta, CA
8. Isaia Mullen, WR, Portland, OR
9. Drake Stallworth, WR, Folsom, CA
10. Josaiah Maama, OL, Sunnyvale, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.3 ppg	8	69
Rushing	163.8 ypg	10	79
Passing	227.5 ypg	4	68
Total	391.3 ypg	8	79
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	37.3 ppg	12	113
Rushing	234.2 ypg	9	113
Passing	227.4 ypg	9	64
Total	461.6 ypg	12	112
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.57	10	111

STAT CORNER

60

Hawaii spent nearly 60 hours round-trip flying to Australia, Michigan and Arizona early in the season.

OFFENSE It's an occurrence that's almost as rare as snow in Hawaii, but the Rainbow Warriors know who their starting quarterback will be: Dru Brown. That's progress for a program that has dealt with an unsettled quarterback position for the last five years. Brown, who showed up last summer as a late junior college transfer, won the job five games into the season and directed UH to its first non-losing finish and bowl game since 2010. Now a junior, Brown owns the job, and the playbook will be opened wider for him.

Keeping running back Diocemy Saint Juste healthy paid big dividends for Hawaii in a 1,006-yard campaign in which he averaged 6.1 yards per carry. Part of the solution was employing Steven Lakalaka, who averaged just 30 yards per game but blasted his way for 13 touchdowns, on short-yardage situations, a role that must now be recast. Mel Davis (returning from injury), Ryan Tuiasoa and freshman Freddie Holly III will audition for the part.

Slot backs John Ursua and Dylan Collie are primed for productive seasons, while wide receivers Ammon Barker and Keelan Ewaliko will be counted on to take up the slack following the departure of Marcus Kemp, the team's top receiver. Metuisela 'Unga began his long-awaited emergence at tight end late last season and will be counted on to fill an expanding role.

The offensive line will be in experienced hands with Dejon Allen, a second-team All-MW pick, at left tackle and the return of Hawaii Bowl starting guards John Wa'a and J. R. Hensley. Asotui Eli, who started over parts of two seasons, returns to center. The Warriors also will add Fred Ulu-Perry, who missed spring practice due to a medical condition. He sat out last season after transferring from UCLA.

DEFENSE One constant with the defense has been change, and this season it comes in the form of Legi Suiaunoa, who is the fifth coach to hold the defensive coordinator position in as many years. The expectation is that at least with Suiaunoa, who was the defensive line coach last season and plans to retain the 4-3 base defense, the transition will be smooth.

A return of the top recruit, defensive end Jamie Tago, after a spring suspension for a violation of team rules, would significantly help the transition. Meffy Koloamatangi, David Manoa, Viane Moala and Penitito Faalologo anchor the defensive line, while Jahlani Tavai is the standout at linebacker.

Trayvon Henderson and Daniel Lewis provide security at safety, but cornerback is still a position under construction with Rojesterman Farris II and Zach Wilson the likely starters.

SPECIALISTS The one thing Hawaii had been able to count on the last four years has been an exceptional kicking game. But the departure of Rigo Sanchez, who handled punting, placekicking and kickoffs, leaves an air of uncertainty. Australian punter Stan Gaudion and placekicker Alex Trifonovitch were the only candidates on the roster in the spring, and the 'Bows were looking for a late-summer pickup.

FINAL ANALYSIS Now that Hawaii has broken a five-year string of losing seasons, the expectation for Year 2 of Nick Rolovich's tenure is for the Rainbow Warriors to capture their first winning season since 2010. The target is reachable thanks to a less arduous schedule — Hawaii traveled more than 46,000 miles in 2016, double most NFL teams — and a strong returning core on offense. But the Warriors will have to shore up a defense that yielded an average of 37.3 points per game and reduce an overall propensity for penalties, an area where they ranked 127th in the nation, to make the climb.



DRU BROWN

"(Nick) Rolovich knows the dynamic out there. And you only win there if you truly understand and work with how unique that job is."
– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	12	Keelan Ewaliko (Sr.)	81	Kalakaua Timoteo (So.)
WR	80	**Ammon Barker (Sr.)**	84	Isaiah Bernard (Sr.)
LT	50	**Dejon Allen (Sr.)**	60	Chris Posa (Sr.)
LG	51	**John Wa'a (Sr.)**	56	Elijah Tupai (Sr.)
C	65	**Asotui Eli (Jr.)**	64	Fred Ulu-Perry (So.)
RG	57	J.R. Hensley (So.)	77	Alesana Sunia (Fr.)
RT	72	Matt Norman (Sr.)	71	Kingjames Taylor (Fr.)
TE	97	Metuisela 'Unga (Sr.)	86	**Dakota Torres (Jr.)**
SLT	45	**John Ursua (So.)**	23	Dylan Collie (Jr.)
QB	19	**Dru Brown (Jr.)**	17	Cole Brownholtz (So.)
RB	22	**Diocemy Saint Juste (Sr.)**	48	Ryan Tuiasoa (Sr.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	95	Jamie Tago (Jr.)	94	Ka'aumoana Gifford (Jr.)
DT	55	**Penitito Faalologo (Sr.)**	91	Samiuela Akoteu (So.)
DT	98	Viane Moala (So.)	99	Zeno Choi (Jr.)
DE	97	**Meffy Koloamatangi (Sr.)**	90	David Manoa (Sr.)
OLB	38	**Malachi Mageo (Jr.)**	40	Dany Mulanga (Jr.)
ILB	31	**Jahlani Tavai (Jr.)**	27	Solomon Matautia (So.)
OLB	10	Jeremiah Pritchard (So.)	22	Ikem Okeke (So.)
CB	20	Zach Wilson (So.)	28	Cameron Hayes (So.)
CB	18	Rojesterman Farris II (So.)	19	Eugene Ford (Fr.)
S	39	**Trayvon Henderson (Sr.)**	37	Austin Gerard (Sr.)
S	15	Daniel Lewis Jr. (Sr.)	13	Keala Santiago (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	46	Alex Trifonovitch (So.)	KR	12	Keelan Ewaliko (Sr.)
P	83	Stan Gaudion (Fr.)	PR	45	John Ursua (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Dru Brown, 335-209-2,488-7, 19 TDs
Rushing: Diocemy Saint Juste, 165 att., 1,006 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: John Ursua, 53 rec., 652 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Jahlani Tavai, 129
Sacks: Jahlani Tavai, 7.0
Interceptions: Trayvon Henderson, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Nick Rolovich
Record at School: 7-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 7-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Brian Smith
Defensive Coordinator: Legi Suiaunoa
Honolulu, HI • Aloha Stadium (50,000)

University of Hawai'i Athletics

NEVADA WOLF PACK

NATIONAL FORECAST: **115** • MW WEST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Northwestern
Sept.	9	Toledo
Sept.	16	Idaho State
Sept.	23	at Washington State
Sept.	30	at Fresno State
Oct.	7	Hawaii
Oct.	14	at Colorado State
Oct.	21	Air Force
Nov.	4	at Boise State
Nov.	11	San Jose State
Nov.	18	at San Diego State
Nov.	25	UNLV

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 MW

Sept.	2	Cal Poly	(ot) W	30-27
Sept.	10	at Notre Dame	L	10-39
Sept.	17	Buffalo	W	38-14
Sept.	24	at Purdue	L	14-24
Oct.	1	at Hawaii	L	17-38
Oct.	8	Fresno State	W	27-22
Oct.	15	at San Jose State	L	10-14
Oct.	22	Wyoming	L	34-42
Nov.	5	at New Mexico	L	26-35
Nov.	12	San Diego State	L	16-46
Nov.	19	Utah State	W	38-37
Nov.	26	at UNLV	W	45-10

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tyson Williams, WR, Dothan, AL
2. Vosean Crumbie, DB, Tallahassee, FL*
3. Lamin Touray, LB, Mission Hills, CA
4. Austin Arnold, ATH, Las Vegas, NV
5. McLane Mannix, WR, Midland, TX
6. Dominic Peterson, DT, Harbor City, CA
7. Marshall Levins, OL, Mansfield, OH*
8. Chris Green, DL, Los Angeles, CA
9. Garrison Young, OL, Carlsbad, CA*
10. Elijah Cooks, WR, Atascadero, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.4 ppg	9	91
Rushing	174.0 ypg	8	64
Passing	208.2 ypg	7	92
Total	382.2 ypg	9	88
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.0 ppg	4	71
Rushing	297.6 ypg	12	128
Passing	158.4 ypg	1	4
Total	456.0 ypg	11	107
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.33	3	36

STAT CORNER

9.8

Nevada allowed 9.8 rushes per game of 10-plus yards, most in the country. The Pack turned every ground game into Air Force's.

OFFENSE New head coach Jay Norvell, a veteran offensive coordinator with stops at Oklahoma, Texas and Arizona State, has promised to revive a stagnant Nevada offense with an up-tempo, pass-happy spread attack.

Still, expect the Wolf Pack to rely on its running game. Nevada's top returning player is unquestionably running back James Butler (1,336 yards, 12 TDs), who is back for his senior year. Butler is dynamic and a candidate for Mountain West Player of the Year honors. But the depth at the position is thin, making Butler's health critical.

Quarterback Ty Gangi showed promise in 2016 (1,301 yards, eight TDs, six INTs) and a more polished arm in spring. But the dual-threat incumbent will be pushed by newcomer David Cornwell, a 6'5", 228-pound junior transfer from Alabama. Cornwell was Norvell's prized first recruit, and the pro-style quarterback will battle Gangi for the job.

Who will protect the quarterback is an open question. Nevada's offensive line has struggled, and the unit is again inexperienced and thin. Senior left tackle Austin Corbett is an all-conference player. Juniors Daren Echeveria and Sean Krepsz add some starting experience, but junior college transfers Marshall Levins and Anthony Palomares will likely be called on immediately.

Senior receiver Wyatt Demps (686 yards, nine TDs) should thrive under the new system, and junior Andrew Celis adds experience. But no other Nevada receiver has more than six career catches. The team was high on freshman Trevion Armstrong during the spring, and the Pack added five wide receivers in its recruiting class, so expect new faces to emerge.

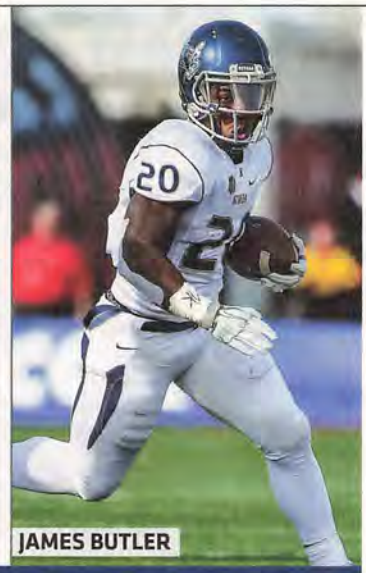
DEFENSE Norvell will also switch the Pack's defensive attack to a 3-3-5 stack from 4-3 and lean on the expertise of new coordinator Jeff Casteel, who ran the scheme at Arizona and West Virginia. Change was needed. Nevada lacked size and talent up front, and opponents battered the Pack with 297.6 rushing yards per game in 2016 — the most allowed by any team in the nation.

The Pack have the athleticism and depth in the secondary to fit the new scheme. Safeties Asauni Rufus and Dameon Baber are among the top defensive backs in the league. Seniors Jaden Sawyer and Kendall Johnson and a host of younger cornerbacks give Nevada the right personnel.

But the front six is a question mark. Junior end Malik Reed is a dark horse league Defensive Player of the Year candidate, and sophomore middle linebacker Gabriel Sewell could soon emerge as an all-conference pick. The Pack need senior end Patrick Choudja to finally arrive, especially as Reed fights double-teams. Sophomore nose tackle Hausia Sekona is a bit undersized, but he gained a lot of experience last season. Keep an eye on redshirt freshman linebacker Kameron Toomer, who could emerge.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Spencer Pettit (7-of-9 field goals) emerged to buoy a struggling special teams unit during his freshman season. Nevada went through spring drills with only a freshman walk-on punter on its roster, so expect an offseason addition to fill the large shoes of Alex Boy. Celis handled punt returns last season, but he will be challenged by a host of talented newcomers.

FINAL ANALYSIS Norvell's rebuild will take some time. Adopting a new offensive system and reforming a defense that has struggled will lead to growing pains. And with many of its toughest games on the road, including dates against Northwestern, Washington State, Boise State and San Diego State, easy wins will be scarce. Nevada does have some talent, but bowl eligibility is a long shot.



JAMES BUTLER

"It will be interesting to watch Jay Norvell take a program famous for running the football out of the Pistol and go all-in with an Air Raid attack."
– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	19	**Wyatt Demps (Sr.)**	80	Jason Elenberger (Jr.)
WR	83	Andrew Celis (Jr.)	3	Ahki Muhammad (Jr.)
WR	5	Trevion Armstrong (Fr.)	17	Brendan O'Leary-Orange (So.)
LT	73	**Austin Corbett (Sr.)**	76	Nate Brown (Fr.)
LG	77	Ziad Damanhoury (Jr.)	53	Tyler Rosentreter (Sr.)
C	64	**Sean Krepsz (Jr.)**	74	Ilya Lopez (Sr.)
RG	63	Daren Echeveria (Jr.)	75	Carl Burton-Hill (Fr.)
RT	71	Jake Nelson (Jr.)	65	Clifford Porter (So.)
TE	86	Brandon Scott (Jr.)	85	Miles Beach (Fr.)
QB	12	David Cornwell (Jr.)	6	Ty Gangi (Jr.)
RB	20	**James Butler (Sr.)**	24	Jaxson Kincaide (So.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	95	Patrick Choudja (Sr.)	93	**Jordon Silva (Jr.)**
NT	96	Hausia Sekona (So.)	78	Jarius McDade (Sr.)
DE	90	**Malik Reed (Jr.)**	99	Korey Rush (Jr.)
LB	50	Austin Paulhus (Sr.)	98	Kameron Toomer (Fr.)
LB	7	**Gabriel Sewell (So.)**	30	Lawson Hall (Fr.)
LB	34	Travis Wilson (Sr.)	52	D.T. Powe (Fr.)
CB	26	**Kendall Johnson (Sr.)**	25	Daniel Brown (So.)
CB	18	Elijah Moody (Jr.)	4	EJ Muhammad (So.)
S	8	**Jaden Sawyer (Sr.)**	33	Morris Bowman (Fr.)
S	2	**Asauni Rufus (Jr.)**	9	Marcus Lucas (Fr.)
S	5	**Dameon Baber (Jr.)**	19	Daylon Johnson (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	48	Spencer Pettit (So.)	KR	83	Andrew Celis (Jr.)
P	99	Fernando Pujals (Fr.)	PR	83	Andrew Celis (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ty Gangi, 172-99-1,301-6, 8 TDs
Rushing: James Butler, 260 att., 1,336 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Wyatt Demps, 53 rec., 686 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Asauni Rufus, 95
Sacks: Malik Reed, 5.0
Interceptions: Jaden Sawyer, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jay Norvell
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Matt Mumme
Defensive Coordinator: Jeff Casteel
Reno, NV • Mackay Stadium (30,000)

David J. Becker/Getty Images

SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **61** • MW WEST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-5, 6-2 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	UC Davis
Sept.	9	at Arizona State
Sept.	16	Stanford
Sept.	23	at Air Force
Sept.	30	Northern Illinois
Oct.	7	at UNLV
Oct.	14	Boise State
Oct.	21	Fresno State
Oct.	28	at Hawaii
Nov.	4	at San Jose State
Nov.	18	Nevada
Nov.	25	New Mexico

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-3, 6-2 MW

Sept.	3	New Hampshire	W	31-0
Sept.	10	California	W	45-40
Sept.	17	at Northern Illinois	W	42-28
Oct.	1	at South Alabama	L	24-42
Oct.	8	UNLV	W	26-7
Oct.	14	at Fresno State	W	17-3
Oct.	21	San Jose State	W	42-3
Oct.	28	at Utah State	W	40-13
Nov.	5	Hawaii	W	55-0
Nov.	12	at Nevada	W	46-16
Nov.	19	at Wyoming	L	33-34
Nov.	26	Colorado State	L	31-63
Dec.	3	at Wyoming #	W	27-24
Dec.	17	vs. Houston %	W	34-10

#MW Championship %Las Vegas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kaegun Williams, RB, Cedar Hill, TX
2. Darren Hall, DB, Pasadena, CA
3. Cam Roane, QB, Colleyville, TX
4. Tayari Venable, DB, Moreno Valley, CA
5. Andrew Aleki, LB, Honolulu, HI
6. Dominic Gudino, OL, Chula Vista, CA
7. Anthony Luke, DL, Roseville, CA*
8. Chance Bell, RB, Burbank, CA
9. Caden McDonald, LB, Haslet, TX
10. Chris Martinez, OL, Turlock, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.2 ppg	4	29
Rushing	262.9 ypg	3	7
Passing	144.5 ypg	10	119
Total	407.4 ypg	6	68
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	20.2 ppg	1	17
Rushing	105.7 ypg	1	6
Passing	209.7 ypg	6	42
Total	315.4 ypg	1	11
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
+14	+1.00	1	4

STAT CORNER

6.3

SDSU's field position margin was plus-6.3 yards per drive, 11th in FBS. Efficient offense plus efficient defense equals tilted field.

OFFENSE San Diego State prides itself on its rushing accomplishments, and one of its tasks is to replace NCAA all-time leading rusher Donnel Pumphrey (6,405 yards). Yet the chore might not be as difficult as it seems with senior Rashaad Penny ready to build on his own spectacular campaign.

The Aztecs were the first team in NCAA history to feature both a 2,000-yard rusher (Pumphrey, 2,133) and 1,000-yard rusher (Penny, 1,018) in the same season and set a school mark with 3,680 rushing yards. Penny posted an electrifying 7.5 average, and coach Rocky Long asserts that Penny will get 25-plus carries per game this season. That workload would provide Penny with the chance of putting up big numbers. "It's a big step for me," Penny says. "I know everybody's wondering what's going to happen to us with (Pumphrey) gone."

The passing game doesn't scare anyone, but quarterback Christian Chapman tossed 20 scoring passes despite throwing for just 1,994 yards. The junior also avoids mistakes and threw just six interceptions.

Chapman had surgery on his passing thumb after being injured in the Las Vegas Bowl victory over Houston but will be ready for fall camp. Rutgers transfer Chris Laviano arrives in the summer and will initially compete with sophomore Ryan Agnew for the backup spot.

Senior Mikah Holder is the team's top wideout and averaged 21.5 yards with five touchdowns on 27 receptions last season. Senior tight end David Wells (25 catches) is also solid, while senior right guard Antonio Rosales is the standout of a young but promising offensive line.

DEFENSE An opportunistic nature has been a staple of the Aztecs under Long. The team has intercepted the most passes (49) in the nation over the past two seasons. Senior Kameron Kelly nabbed five last season and has moved to cornerback from safety now that school career interceptions leader Damontae Kazee (17) is off to the NFL. Sophomore Ron Smith is a budding standout after returning two of his three interceptions for touchdowns last season, while junior Parker Baldwin is the most productive back-end performer in the team's three-safety alignment.

Junior outside linebacker Ronley Lakalaka was second with 73 tackles last season and also returned an interception for a touchdown. Senior Ryan Dunn moves from the middle to the flank, and the coaches believe that the move will increase his production. The defensive line has holes, but senior end Dakota Turner and junior end Noble Hall have been key contributors.

SPECIALISTS Penny has five career kickoff returns for touchdowns and averaged a scintillating 31.2 yards per return last season. He will likely receive fewer opportunities now that he is the starting running back, and that will provide sophomore Juwan Washington more chances. Junior placekicker John Baron II was outstanding in 2016 and set school records for field goals (21) and field goal percentage (91.3).

FINAL ANALYSIS San Diego State went 16–2 against conference foes while winning back-to-back Mountain West titles and expects to compete for a third. The Aztecs have won 11 games just four times in school history, with two of those seasons coming in the past two years. Long has established San Diego State as a sturdy program that can prevail at a level higher than the collective talent. The formula of physically running the ball with an opportunistic defensive assault wears down opponents and has helped lead to a school-record seven consecutive bowl appearances. The Aztecs routed Cincinnati and Houston by a combined 76–17 in their past two bowl games and should be one of the top non-Power 5 teams in the nation this season.



RASHAAD PENNY

"They're good enough to win the title again this year. They've got a chance to make national noise like Boise has before them."
– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	6	**Mikah Holder (Sr.)**	89	Fred Trevillion (Jr.)
WR	85	Quest Truxton (Sr.)	92	Isiah Macklin (Fr.)
LT	74	Tyler Roemer (Fr.)	72	Derrick Achayo (Jr.)
LG	60	Keith Ismael (Fr.)	70	Ladji Bagayoko (Fr.)
C	62	Nick Gerhard (So.)	76	Zachary Thomas (Fr.)
RG	67	**Antonio Rosales (Sr.)**	79	Daishawn Dixon (So.)
RT	77	Ryan Pope (Jr.)	53	Douglas Tucker II (Fr.)
TE	88	**David Wells (Sr.)**	82	Parker Houston (So.)
QB	10	**Christian Chapman (Jr.)**		Chris Laviano (Sr.)
RB	20	Rashaad Penny (Sr.)	29	Juwan Washington (So.)
FB	15	**Nick Bawden (Sr.)**	34	Isaac Lessard (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	41	Dakota Turner (Sr.)	55	Chibu Onyeukwu (Jr.)
NT	65	Sergio Phillips (Sr.)	94	Jondarius Gardner (Sr.)
DE	95	**Noble Hall (Jr.)**	68	Myles Cheatum (So.)
OLB	57	**Ryan Dunn (Sr.)**	42	Troy Cassidy (So.)
MLB	46	Jay Henderson (Sr.)	40	Randy Ricks (Sr.)
OLB	39	**Ronley Lakalaka (Jr.)**	44	Kyahva Tezino (So.)
CB	17	**Ron Smith (So.)**	27	Kyree Woods (So.)
CB	7	Kameron Kelly (Sr.)	30	Garrett Binkley (So.)
S	18	Trenton Thompson (So.)	10	Jeff Clay (So.)
S	3	**Trey Lomax (Sr.)**	16	Dwayne Parchment (So.)
AZT	33	**Parker Baldwin (Jr.)**	37	Dwayne Johnson Jr. (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	29	John Baron II (Jr.)	KR	20	Rashaad Penny (Sr.)
P	29	John Baron II (Jr.)	PR	85	Quest Truxton (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Christian Chapman, 251-153-1,994-6, 20 TDs
Rushing: Rashaad Penny, 136 att., 1,018 yds., 11 TDs
Receiving: Mikah Holder, 27 rec., 581 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Ronley Lakalaka, 73
Sacks: Noble Hall, 3.0; Sergio Phillips, 3.0
Interceptions: Kameron Kelly, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Rocky Long
Record at School: 54-26 (6 years)
Career Record: 119-95 (17 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jeff Horton
Defensive Coordinators: Danny Gonzales, Rocky Long
San Diego, CA • Qualcomm Stadium (54,000)

Ernie Anderson/SDSU Athletic Media Relations

SAN JOSE STATE SPARTANS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **122** • MW WEST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **2-11, 1-7 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	26	South Florida
Sept.	2	Cal Poly
Sept.	9	at Texas
Sept.	16	at Utah
Sept.	23	Utah State
Sept.	30	at UNLV
Oct.	7	Fresno State
Oct.	14	at Hawaii
Oct.	28	at BYU
Nov.	4	San Diego State
Nov.	11	at Nevada
Nov.	18	at Colorado State
Nov.	25	Wyoming

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 MW

Sept.	3	at Tulsa	L	10-45
Sept.	10	Portland State	W	66-35
Sept.	17	Utah	L	17-34
Sept.	24	at Iowa State	L	10-44
Oct.	1	at New Mexico	L	41-48
Oct.	8	Hawaii	L	17-34
Oct.	15	Nevada	W	14-10
Oct.	21	at San Diego State	L	3-42
Oct.	29	UNLV	W	30-24
Nov.	4	at Boise State	L	31-45
Nov.	19	Air Force	L	38-41
Nov.	26	at Fresno State	W	16-14

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tysyn Parker, LB, Gardena, CA
2. Tre White, DB, Benicia, CA
3. Terrell Carter, QB, San Diego, CA
4. Tyler Nevens, RB, Hacienda Heights, CA
5. Johnny Balderas, DB, Shafter, CA
6. Antwaun Ayres, WR, West Covina, CA
7. Tre Walker, WR, Inglewood, CA
8. Jesse Chamberlain, OL, Burbank, CA
9. Jamaar Hardy, DL, Antioch, CA
10. Austin Liles, WR, Anaheim, CA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.4 ppg	10	103
Rushing	155.8 ypg	11	87
Passing	222.1 ypg	5	75
Total	377.8 ypg	10	94
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	34.7 ppg	10	103
Rushing	246.7 ypg	10	122
Passing	188.6 ypg	4	19
Total	435.3 ypg	9	88
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	8	75

STAT CORNER

3.9/5.7

San Jose State averaged 3.9 points per trip inside the 40 (111th in FBS) and allowed 5.7 (128th).

OFFENSE New coach Brent Brennan was in search of a quarterback throughout the spring, telling the *San Jose Mercury* at one point: "They take turns playing well and screwing it up." There were four candidates, and the competition will likely last into the fall. Sophomore Josh Love saw extensive action in two games in 2016, completing 31-of-60 passes for 392 yards with two TDs and five INTs. The other three quarterbacks redshirted. Montel Aaron and Sam Allen are mobile QBs, while Michael Carrillo ran the scout team last season and showed enough to compete for the starting job.

The skill position players should take some pressure off the new QB. Leading rusher Malik Roberson and Zamore Zigler give the Spartans two backs with breakaway potential, and the receiving corps of Justin Holmes, Tre Hartley, Rahshead Johnson and Bailey Gaither is solid.

The majority of the offensive line has been together the past two seasons, but it's a group that has ranked last in the Mountain West over that span with 88 sacks allowed. San Jose State averaged 4.9 yards per rush last season when sacks are taken out, so the line has proven it can succeed in the run game but clearly must get better in pass protection.

DEFENSE San Jose State struggled against the run in 2016, ranking 122nd in the nation. The new staff is switching from a 4-3 to a 3-4 alignment, and the front seven was in flux during the spring.

Junior Bryson Bridges will start at defensive tackle, while leading tackler Frank Ginda is back at inside linebacker. Beyond that, there will be some mixing and matching to fill in the gaps. Owen Roberts made the most tackles of any defensive lineman last season, but he will have to shift from nose tackle to defensive end. Mikal Berry and Nico Aimonetti — a pair of seniors with limited experience last season — are in the mix at defensive end.

Joining Ginda at linebacker should be Ethan Aguayo, a sophomore who made 10 starts last season. He and David Williams are athletic outside linebackers who are capable at matching up in the slot or with tight ends in the passing game.

The secondary, which helped SJSU to a No. 19 ranking in pass defense a year ago, returns all four starters, including the team's best player. Corner Andre Chachere has a potential NFL future and was first-team All-Mountain West a year ago. Jermaine Kelly eventually beat out Dakari Monroe at the other corner spot, but both are back and give the Spartans a strong nickel option. At safety, Maurice McKnight was third in tackles and is an all-league candidate, while Trevon Bierria returns at the other safety spot.

SPECIALISTS Both punter Michael Carrizosa and kicker Bryce Crawford return, which is good news for the Spartans. Carrizosa was a Ray Guy finalist in 2015 and averaged 44.3 yards last season. He also handles the kickoff duties and had 68 percent of his kickoffs result in touchbacks. Crawford was an impressive 16-for-18 on the season, but he was just 1-for-2 from beyond 40 and missed two extra points.

FINAL ANALYSIS Brennan takes over as a first-time head coach, but he is familiar with the program — he was an assistant at the school for six seasons (2005-10), and his father played at San Jose State in the late 1960s.

He faces challenges at quarterback and finding enough quality players to fill out the front seven on defense, so it is hard to see San Jose State improving on last season's 4–8 mark — even though the Spartans do not face Boise State or Air Force from the Mountain Division.



FRANK GINDA

"The best move they could make was going with a (Mike) MacIntyre assistant in Brent Brennan. He's a real high-energy guy."

– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	9	Justin Holmes (Jr.)	11	JaQuan Blackwell (Fr.)
WR	22	Thai Cottrell (Jr.)	84	Bailey Gaither (So.)
WR	13	Tre Hartley (Jr.)	8	Rahshead Johnson (Jr.)
LT	75	**Nate Velichko (Sr.)**	72	Jake Colman (Jr.)
LG	62	**Jeremiah Kolone (Sr.)**	66	Dominic Frederickson (So.)
C	68	**Keoni Taylor (Sr.)**	56	Kyle Hoppe (Fr.)
RG	74	**Chris Gonzalez (Sr.)**	65	Trevor Robbins (Fr.)
RT	79	**Troy Kowalski (So.)**	54	Charles Nelson (Jr.)
TE	89	**Josh Oliver (Jr.)**	81	Billy Humphreys (Fr.)
QB	12	Josh Love (So.)	7	Montel Aaron (Fr.)
RB	20	Malik Roberson (Jr.)	34	Zamore Zigler (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	43	Mikal Berry (Sr.)	95	Cameron Alexander (Fr.)
DT	59	**Bryson Bridges (Jr.)**	78	Deano Motes (So.)
DE	51	**Owen Roberts (Jr.)**	67	Nico Aimonetti (Sr.)
OLB	31	**Ethan Aguayo (So.)**	36	Malik Hayes (So.)
ILB	5	**Frank Ginda (Jr.)**	42	Jamal Scott (Jr.)
ILB	11	William Ossai (Sr.)	45	Noah Failauga (So.)
OLB	44	Justin Parcells (So.)	7	David Williams (Jr.)
CB	21	**Andre Chachere (Sr.)**	26	Tre Webb (Fr.)
CB	3	Jermaine Kelly (Sr.)	19	**Dakari Monroe (Jr.)**
S	23	**Trevon Bierria (So.)**	25	Chandler Hawkins (Jr.)
S	10	**Maurice McKnight (Sr.)**	15	Chad Miller (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	17	Michael Carrizosa (Sr.)	KR	8	Rahshead Johnson (Jr.)
P	38	Bryce Crawford (Jr.)	PR	22	Thai Cottrell (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Josh Love, 60-31-392-5, 2 TDs
Rushing: Malik Roberson, 99 att., 508 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Justin Holmes, 39 rec., 613 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Frank Ginda, 99
Sacks: Frank Ginda, 6.5
Interceptions: Andre Chachere, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Brent Brennan
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Andrew Sowder
Defensive Coordinator: Derrick Odum
San Jose, CA • CEFCU Stadium (30,456)

Terrell Lloyd/San Jose State Athletics

UNLV REBELS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **105** • MW WEST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 3-5 MW**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Howard	
Sept. 9	at Idaho	
Sept. 23	at Ohio State	
Sept. 30	San Jose State	
Oct. 7	San Diego State	
Oct. 14	at Air Force	
Oct. 21	Utah State	
Oct. 28	at Fresno State	
Nov. 4	Hawaii	
Nov. 10	BYU	
Nov. 18	at New Mexico	
Nov. 25	at Nevada	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 MW

Sept. 1	Jackson State		W	63-13
Sept. 10	at UCLA		L	21-42
Sept. 17	at Central Michigan		L	21-44
Sept. 24	Idaho	(ot)	L	30-33
Oct. 1	Fresno State		W	45-20
Oct. 8	at San Diego State		L	7-26
Oct. 15	at Hawaii		W	41-38
Oct. 22	Colorado State		L	23-42
Oct. 29	at San Jose State		L	24-30
Nov. 12	Wyoming	(ot)	W	69-66
Nov. 18	at Boise State		L	25-42
Nov. 26	Nevada		L	10-45

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tariq Hollandsworth, RB, Sacramento, CA
2. Marckell Grayson, QB, Las Vegas, NV
3. Drew Tejchman, WR, Acworth, GA
4. Farrell Hester II, LB, Las Vegas, NV
5. Greg Francis, DB, Las Vegas, NV
6. Daniel Schoene, OL, Bakersfield, CA
7. Justice Oluwaseun, OL, Richmond, TX
8. Noah Bean, TE, Simi Valley, CA
9. Jamaal Neal, TE/H-B, South Gate, CA
10. Jacob Rominger, LB, Overland Park, KS*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	MW	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.6 ppg	7	47
Rushing	241.5 ypg	4	15
Passing	162.9 ypg	9	114
Total	404.4 ypg	7	70
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	36.8 ppg	11	112
Rushing	186.9 ypg	5	74
Passing	243.2 ypg	10	81
Total	430.1 ypg	8	80
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**MW**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.17	5	47

STAT CORNER

-5.2

UNLV's field position margin was minus-5.2 yards per drive (120th in FBS). The Rebels too often started drives in a hole from which they could not escape.

OFFENSE All eyes will be on redshirt freshman quarterback Armani Rogers, the top recruit during Tony Sanchez's three years on campus. The 6'5", 225-pound Rogers, the son of 10-year NFL linebacker Sam Rogers, originally committed to Cal while starring at Hamilton High School in Los Angeles before switching to the Rebels. He took the majority of the first-team snaps in spring practice and displayed a strong arm to go along with a punishing running style. Senior Johnny Stanton, a former first-team junior college All-American who began his career at Nebraska, and senior Kurt Palandech, an explosive runner who came off the bench to lead UNLV to a memorable Fremont Cannon victory at Nevada as a sophomore, provide excellent depth.

Sophomore Charles Williams and juniors Lexington Thomas and Xzaviar Campbell return to lead a deep running back corps that produced an average of 241.5 rushing yards per game, ranking 15th nationally. They'll be running behind an offensive line that returns four starters, including honorable mention All-Mountain West tackle Nathan Jacobson and sophomore guard Justin Polu. However, the one loss on the line, center Will Kreitler, was key, and junior college transfer Sid Acosta, expected to take over for Kreitler, tore his ACL in spring practice and will miss the season.

The wide receiver unit, which was ravaged by injuries last fall, could be the strength of the offense. Senior Devonte Boyd — a preseason first-team All-Mountain West pick as a junior who has 164 career receptions — was slowed by an arm injury, while junior Kendal Keys and sophomores Brandon Presley, one of the stars of spring drills, and Darren Woods Jr. also return from injuries. They'll be joined by standout freshman Drew Tejchman.

DEFENSE Only two starters return on a defense that allowed an average of 36.8 points and 430.1 yards per game and faded badly down the stretch, giving up 42 or more points in four of its final five contests.

The big loss was at linebacker, where Tau Lotulelei, a second-team All-Mountain West pick who led the team in tackles (117) and tackles for a loss (16.5), departs along with underrated Ryan McAleenan. Gabe McCoy drew high marks for his play in the spring, but depth is a big concern.

The line, which wore down as the season progressed, should be improved and is anchored by tackles Mike Hughes Jr. and Salanoa-Alo Wily.

The secondary, prone to giving up big plays (23 TD passes allowed), doesn't return any starters following the departure of junior corner Darius Mouton after spring practice.

SPECIALISTS Junior Evan Pantels returns to handle both the punting and placekicking duties and is a solid all-conference candidate. He averaged 41.7 yards on 64 punts, including eight of 50 yards or more, and connected on 13-of-14 field goal attempts. Williams and Presley are expected to help boost a return game that was pitiful, ranking 127th in punt returns and 105th in kickoff returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Rebels have improved their win total by one game in each of Sanchez's first two years as head coach, which was good enough to earn the former prep national championship coach at nearby Bishop Gorman High School a three-year contract extension through 2021 and a $100,000 per year raise. With Mountain Division heavyweights Boise State, Colorado State and Wyoming all coming off the schedule rotation this year and a deeper squad to work with, UNLV will have an opportunity to take another step foward in 2017. The Rebels should field one of the conference's top scoring offenses this year. The question is: Will they be able to slow opponents down enough to parlay that into the six wins necessary for bowl eligibility?



CHARLES WILLIAMS

"Still a major work in progress. (Tony) Sanchez is basically building a program from scratch in a place that was decades behind."

– An opposing MW assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	83	**Devonte Boyd (Sr.)**	82	Elijah Trosclair (So.)
WR	80	Brandon Presley (So.)	10	**Darren Woods Jr. (So.)**
WR	84	Kendal Keys (Jr.)	2	**Mekhi Stevenson (So.)**
LT	76	**Kyle Saxelid (Sr.)**	77	**Michael Chevalier (Sr.)**
LG	75	Jaron Caldwell (So.)	72	Matt Brayton (Fr.)
C	51	Zack Singer (Jr.)	63	J'Ondray Sanders (Sr.)
RG	78	**Justin Polu (So.)**	74	Julio Garcia II (So.)
RT	64	**Nathan Jacobson (Jr.)**	65	Donovan Outlaw (Fr.)
TE	9	Trevor Kanteman (Sr.)	43	Tim Holt (Sr.)
QB	1	Armani Rogers (Fr.)	4	Johnny Stanton (Sr.)
RB	8	Charles Williams (So.)	3	**Lexington Thomas (Jr.)**

DEFENSE (2)

DE	98	Nick Dehdashtian (So.)	56	Roger Mann (Jr.)
DT	42	**Salanoa-Alo Wily (Jr.)**	95	Jason Fao (Sr.)
DT	99	**Mike Hughes Jr. (Sr.)**		Farrell Hester II (Fr.)
DE	19	Mark Finau (Sr.)	97	Jamal Holloway (Fr.)
SLB	25	Gabe McCoy (So.)	27	David Tate Jr. (Fr.)
MLB	5	Brian Keyes (Sr.)	44	Jacob Rominger (Jr.)
WLB	48	Bailey Laolagi (Jr.)	50	Kyler O'Halloran (Sr.)
CB	13	Tim Hough (Jr.)	7	Jericho Flowers (So.)
CB	24	Robert Jackson (Sr.)		Ty'Jason Roberts (Jr.)
SS	17	Evan Austrie (So.)	16	Javin White (So.)
FS	33	Dalton Baker (Jr.)	22	Demitrious Gibbs (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	30	Evan Pantels (Jr.)	KR	30	Charles Williams (So.)
P	30	Evan Pantels (Jr.)	PR	80	Brandon Presley (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Johnny Stanton, 107-50-676-6, 6 TDs
Rushing: Charles Williams, 141 att., 763 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Devonte Boyd, 45 rec., 746 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Mike Hughes Jr., 37
Sacks: Mike Hughes Jr., 2.0
Interceptions: none

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tony Sanchez
Record at School: 7-17 (2 years)
Career Record: 7-17 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Barney Cotton
Defensive Coordinator: Kent Baer
Las Vegas, NV • Sam Boyd Stadium (36,800)

AP Photo/Eugene Tanner

PAC-12 PREVIEW


JAKE BROWNING

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	NORTH	SOUTH
1	WASHINGTON HUSKIES 12-1, 8-1	USC TROJANS 11-2, 8-1
2	STANFORD CARDINAL 9-3, 6-3	UCLA BRUINS 7-5, 5-4
3	OREGON DUCKS 8-4, 5-4	COLORADO BUFFALOES 7-5, 4-5
4	WASHINGTON STATE COUGARS 8-4, 5-4	UTAH UTES 7-5, 4-5
5	OREGON STATE BEAVERS 5-7, 3-6	ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS 5-7, 2-7
6	CALIFORNIA GOLDEN BEARS 3-9, 2-7	ARIZONA WILDCATS 5-7, 2-7

Pac-12 Championship: Washington over USC

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Peach Bowl (CFP): Alabama 24, Washington 7
Rose Bowl: USC 52, Penn State 49
Alamo Bowl: Oklahoma State 38, Colorado 8
Holiday Bowl: Minnesota 17, Washington State 12
Sun Bowl: Stanford 25, North Carolina 23
Foster Farms Bowl: Utah 26, Indiana 24

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Sugar Bowl (CFP): Washington vs. Alabama
Fiesta Bowl: USC vs. LSU
Alamo Bowl: Stanford vs. Texas
Holiday Bowl: Oregon vs. Northwestern
Foster Farms Bowl: Washington State vs. Iowa
Sun Bowl: UCLA vs. NC State
Las Vegas Bowl: Colorado vs. Boise State
Cactus Bowl: Utah vs. Kansas State

Browning: Craig Mitchelldyer; Darnold: Peter Brouillet

2016 PAC-12 STANDINGS

NORTH	PAC-12	OVERALL
WASHINGTON	8-1	12-2
WASHINGTON STATE	7-2	8-5
STANFORD	6-3	10-3
CALIFORNIA	3-6	5-7
OREGON STATE	3-6	4-8
OREGON	2-7	4-8

SOUTH	PAC-12	OVERALL
COLORADO	8-1	10-4
USC	7-2	10-3
UTAH	5-4	9-4
ARIZONA STATE	2-7	5-7
UCLA	2-7	4-8
ARIZONA	1-8	3-9

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. USC
2. Stanford
3. Oregon
4. UCLA
5. Washington
6. Utah
7. Colorado
8. Arizona State
9. Arizona
10. Washington State
11. Oregon State
12. Cal

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
ARIZONA	10	9	12	6	12	12	10
ARIZONA STATE	9	5	7	10	6	4	12
CALIFORNIA	12	10	4	11	11	11	11
COLORADO	7	6	1	5	9	8	6
OREGON	5	2	8	4	7	10	7
OREGON STATE	11	7	11	12	10	9	9
STANFORD	8	4	9	3	8	3	1
UCLA	4	12	6	9	5	7	3
USC	1	3	3	7	3	2	4
UTAH	6	11	10	8	2	5	8
WASHINGTON	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
WASHINGTON STATE	3	8	5	2	4	6	5


SAM DARNOLD

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Sam Darnold	6-4	225	So.	USC
RB	Royce Freeman	5-11	231	Sr.	Oregon
RB	Myles Gaskin	5-10	191	Jr.	Washington
AP	Phillip Lindsay	5-8	190	Sr.	Colorado
WR	N'Keal Harry	6-4	220	So.	Arizona State
WR	Dante Pettis	6-1	192	Sr.	Washington
WR	Shay Fields	5-11	180	Sr.	Colorado
C	Coleman Shelton	6-4	297	Sr.	Washington
OL	Trey Adams	6-8	320	Jr.	Washington
OL	Tyrell Crosby	6-5	320	Sr.	Oregon
OL	Cody O'Connell	6-8	370	Sr.	Washington State
OL	Scott Quessenberry	6-4	315	Sr.	UCLA

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Greg Gaines	6-2	321	Jr.	Washington
DL	Lowell Lotulelei	6-2	317	Sr.	Utah
DL	Hercules Mata'afa	6-2	255	Jr.	Washington State
DL	Vita Vea	6-5	344	Jr.	Washington
LB	Troy Dye	6-4	225	So.	Oregon
LB	Cameron Smith	6-2	245	Jr.	USC
LB	Azeem Victor	6-3	222	Sr.	Washington
CB	Iman Marshall	6-1	200	Jr.	USC
CB	Quenton Meeks	6-2	204	Jr.	Stanford
S	Chase Hansen	6-3	220	Jr.	Utah
S	Justin Reid	6-1	202	Jr.	Stanford

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Matt Anderson	6-0	195	Sr.	California
P	Mitch Wishnowsky	6-2	220	Jr.	Utah
KR	Charles Nelson	5-8	177	Sr.	Oregon
PR	Dante Pettis	6-1	192	Sr.	Washington

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Jake Browning	6-2	205	Jr.	Washington
RB	Ronald Jones II	6-1	195	Jr.	USC
RB	Ryan Nall	6-2	239	Jr.	Oregon State
AP	Charles Nelson	5-8	177	Sr.	Oregon
WR	Deontay Burnett	6-0	170	Jr.	USC
WR	Darren Carrington II	6-2	200	Sr.	Oregon
TE	Dalton Schultz	6-6	240	Sr.	Stanford
C	Jake Hanson	6-5	307	So.	Oregon
OL	Nate Herbig	6-4	346	So.	Stanford
OL	Jeromy Irwin	6-5	295	Sr.	Colorado
OL	Cole Madison	6-5	315	Sr.	Washington State
OL	Viane Talamaivao	6-2	315	Sr.	USC

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Kylie Fitts	6-4	254	Sr.	Utah
DL	Rasheem Green	6-5	280	Jr.	USC
DL	Harrison Phillips	6-4	285	Sr.	Stanford
DL	JoJo Wicker	6-3	263	Jr.	Arizona State
LB	Keishawn Bierria	6-1	230	Sr.	Washington
LB	Koron Crump	6-3	218	Sr.	Arizona State
LB	Kenny Young	6-1	240	Sr.	UCLA
CB	Alijah Holder	6-2	182	Sr.	Stanford
CB	Isaiah Oliver	6-1	190	Jr.	Colorado
S	Taylor Rapp	6-0	207	So.	Washington
S	Jaleel Wadood	5-9	185	Sr.	UCLA

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Aidan Schneider	6-4	240	Sr.	Oregon
P	Jake Bailey	6-2	192	Jr.	Stanford
KR	Kalen Ballage	6-2	227	Sr.	Arizona State
PR	Charles Nelson	5-8	177	Sr.	Oregon

CALIFORNIA GOLDEN BEARS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **76** • PAC-12 NORTH PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-7 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at North Carolina
Sept.	9	Weber State
Sept.	16	Ole Miss
Sept.	23	USC
Sept.	30	at Oregon
Oct.	7	at Washington
Oct.	13	Washington State
Oct.	21	Arizona
Oct.	28	at Colorado
Nov.	4	Oregon State
Nov.	18	at Stanford
Nov.	24	at UCLA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 3-6 PAC-12

Aug.	26	vs. Hawaii #	W	51-31
Sept.	10	at San Diego State	L	40-45
Sept.	17	Texas	W	50-43
Sept.	24	at Arizona State	L	41-51
Oct.	1	Utah	W	28-23
Oct.	8	at Oregon State (ot)	L	44-47
Oct.	21	Oregon (ot)	W	52-49
Oct.	27	at USC	L	24-45
Nov.	5	Washington	L	27-66
Nov.	12	at Washington State	L	21-56
Nov.	19	Stanford	L	31-45
Nov.	26	UCLA	W	36-10

#Sydney, Australia

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Chase Garbers, QB, Newport Beach, CA
2. Elijah Hicks, DB, Long Beach, CA
3. Taariq Johnson, WR, Buena Park, CA
4. Biaggio Ali Walsh, RB, Las Vegas, NV
5. Jeremiah Hawkins, WR, Buena Park, CA
6. Poutasi Poutasi, OL, Las Vegas, NV
7. Branden Smith, DB, Lancaster, CA
8. Gabe Cherry, DL, Bakersfield, CA
9. Ben Moos, TE, Pullman, WA
10. Michael Saffell, OL, Huntington Beach, CA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	37.1 ppg	3	22
Rushing	154.3 ypg	9	88
Passing	358.8 ypg	2	4
Total	513.2 ypg	1	10
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	42.6 ppg	12	127
Rushing	272.8 ypg	12	127
Passing	245.4 ypg	7	84
Total	518.3 ypg	10	125
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.25	5	41

STAT CORNER

4.9

Justin Wilcox's Wisconsin defense allowed 4.9 yards per play in 2016. Cal hasn't allowed under 5.5 yards per play since 2011.

OFFENSE The Bears, under new coach Justin Wilcox, still will run tempo, but not always at the breakneck pace they tried to generate under former coach Sonny Dykes. The tight end will return, and with it more power-running formations. The quarterback could line up under center at times. The Bears may even huddle now and then. "We'll do certain things that are a little bit different," new offensive coordinator Beau Baldwin says. "But it's not going to be, 'Holy cow, this is wholesale, night-and-day different.'"

The biggest personnel question: Who is the quarterback? The Bears went into the summer without a clear No. 1 after junior Chase Forrest and sophomore Ross Bowers dueled fairly evenly through spring ball. The two did not attempt a single pass between them last season behind graduate transfer Davis Webb, but Baldwin says he will be comfortable with either.

The new quarterback will rely on senior running backs Tre Watson and Vic Enwere, both 1,000-yard career rushers. Watson, a 5'11", 205-pounder, provides a burst. Enwere, at 6'0", 245, brings power. "We're going to feed off each other — Thunder and Lightning," Watson says.

Prolific wideout Chad Hansen is gone, but a deep returning group is headlined by Demetris Robertson, who caught 50 passes as a freshman and had at least one gain of 32 yards or longer in seven different games. Ray Hudson, a slot receiver last season, becomes a tight end in Baldwin's scheme.

Cal faces a major rebuild along its offensive line after the departure of three players who combined to start 103 career games. Center Addison Ooms, a one-time walk-on, and guard Dwayne Wallace are the only returning starters.

DEFENSE New coordinator Tim DeRuyter must sell his vision of an aggressive, attacking defense to players who were part of a unit that allowed 40 points or more nine times last season. "We've got decent talent, probably better than I expected," he says. "We can be better. A quantum difference? It remains to be seen." DeRuyter has switched to a base 3-4 alignment, which will be anchored by senior James Looney, an honorable mention All-Pac-12 pick. But there is little depth in the defensive front.

The senior inside linebacker duo of Devante Downs and Raymond Davison represents the strength of the unit. Cameron Saffle made an encouraging transition from defensive end to outside linebacker last spring. The Bears have struggled in the secondary in recent years, but seniors Darius Allensworth and Marloshawn Franklin provide experience at cornerback. There is less certainty at safety, where the Bears are hoping talented sophomore Evan Rambo will have recovered enough from an ACL tear early last season to hold down one spot.

SPECIALISTS Matt Anderson has made 40-of-47 field goal tries the past two seasons and missed only one from inside 40 yards last fall. Junior Dylan Klumph averaged 44.8 yards per punt, although the coverage team was iffy. Cal was 10th in kickoff returns and last in the Pac-12 in punt returns a year ago.

FINAL ANALYSIS Cal fans will see plenty of changes this season, but Wilcox isn't resigned to starting from scratch. "We're not here thinking we're rebuilding," he says. "We've got some good players. We're going out to win." Achieving that in Year 1 may be ambitious. The schedule is tough, quarterback is unsettled and there are big questions along both fronts.

Wilcox is taking a big-picture approach to the assignment. "It's what you do every day and how you do it that's the secret sauce," he says.

For now, the Bears may find themselves thinly spreading whatever secret sauce they devise.



DEMETRIS ROBERTSON

"Their coordinator (Beau Baldwin) is a good football coach who's going to bring a system he's developed and won a bunch of games with in FCS."
– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	8	**Demetris Robertson (So.)**	17	Vic Wharton III (Jr.)	
WR	1	**Melquise Stovall (So.)**	19	Brandon Singleton (So.)	
WR	15	Jordan Veasy (Sr.)	2	Jordan Duncan (So.)	
LT	72	Kamryn Bennett (Jr.)	71	Jake Curhan (Fr.)	
LG	79	Patrick Mekari (Jr.)	54	Gentle Williams (Fr.)	
C	57	**Addison Ooms (Jr.)**	74	Ryan Gibson (So.)	
RG	62	**Dwayne Wallace (Sr.)**	58	Semisi Uluave (Jr.)	
RT	71	Jake Curhan (Fr.)	77	J.D. Hinnant (Sr.)	
TE	11	Ray Hudson (Sr.)	89	Matt Laris (Fr.)	
QB	14	Chase Forrest (Jr.)	3	Ross Bowers (So.)	
RB	5	Tre Watson (Sr.)	23	Vic Enwere (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	44	Zeandae Johnson (So.)	33	Noah Westerfield (Sr.)
NT	97	**Tony Mekari (Sr.)**	93	Luc Bequette (So.)
DE	9	**James Looney (Sr.)**	90	Rusty Becker (Sr.)
OLB	51	**Cameron Saffle (Jr.)**	89	Evan Weaver (So.)
ILB	1	**Devante Downs (Sr.)**	59	Jordan Kunaszyk (Jr.)
ILB	31	**Raymond Davison (Sr.)**	11	Hamilton Anoa'i (Sr.)
OLB	36	Alex Funches (Jr.)	19	Cameron Goode (Fr.)
CB	2	Darius Allensworth (Sr.)	22	Traveon Beck (So.)
CB	18	**Marloshawn Franklin Jr. (Sr.)**	3	Elijah Hicks (Fr.)
SS	28	Quentin Tartabull (Jr.)	4	Derron Brown (Jr.)
FS	21	Evan Rambo (So.)	6	Jaylinn Hawkins (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	9	Matt Anderson (Sr.)	KR	5	Tre Watson (Sr.)
P	42	Dylan Klumph (Jr.)	PR	17	Vic Wharton III (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Dylan Klumph, 1-1-11-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Tre Watson, 143 att., 709 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Demetris Robertson, 50 rec., 767 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Devante Downs, 84
Sacks: Cameron Saffle, 4.0
Interceptions: Luke Rubenzer, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Justin Wilcox
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Beau Baldwin
Defensive Coordinator: Tim DeRuyter
Berkeley, CA • Memorial Stadium (62,467)

Peter Brouillet

OREGON DUCKS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **21** • PAC-12 NORTH PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 5-4 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Southern Utah
Sept.	9	Nebraska
Sept.	16	at Wyoming
Sept.	23	at Arizona State
Sept.	30	California
Oct.	7	Washington State
Oct.	14	at Stanford
Oct.	21	at UCLA
Oct.	28	Utah
Nov.	4	at Washington
Nov.	18	Arizona
Nov.	25	Oregon State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 2-7 PAC-12

Sept.	3	UC Davis	W	53-28
Sept.	10	Virginia	W	44-26
Sept.	17	at Nebraska	L	32-35
Sept.	24	Colorado	L	38-41
Oct.	1	at Washington State	L	33-51
Oct.	8	Washington	L	21-70
Oct.	21	at California	(ot) L	49-52
Oct.	29	Arizona State	W	54-35
Nov.	5	at USC	L	20-45
Nov.	12	Stanford	L	27-52
Nov.	19	at Utah	W	30-28
Nov.	26	at Oregon State	L	24-34

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Deommodore Lenoir, CB, Los Angeles, CA
2. Thomas Graham Jr., CB, Rancho Cucamonga, CA
3. Braxton Burmeister, QB, La Jolla, CA
4. Isaac Slade-Matautia, LB, Honolulu, HI
5. Rutger Reitmaier, DT, Nashville, TN
6. Sampson Niu, LB, San Diego, CA
7. Popo Aumavae, OL, Stockton, CA
8. George Moore, OL, Antioch, CA*
9. Cyrus Habibi-Likio, ATH, Mountain View, CA
10. CJ Verdell, RB, Chula Vista, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.4 ppg	4	27
Rushing	226.4 ypg	2	27
Passing	265.3 ypg	5	31
Total	491.7 ypg	2	15
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	41.4 ppg	11	126
Rushing	246.5 ypg	11	121
Passing	271.9 ypg	10	113
Total	518.4 ypg	11	126
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.25	10	85

STAT CORNER

52

Freshmen and sophomores made 52% of Oregon's tackles. If you're looking for why Oregon forced just 12 turnovers, start there.

OFFENSE Coming off a 4–8 season that precipitated a coaching change, Oregon has plenty of question marks entering 2017. The ability to score points won't be one of them.

The Ducks return quarterback Justin Herbert, who took over the starting job in the midst of his true freshman season and has all the tools to be a star. Senior running back Royce Freeman already is a star, though a 945-yard junior season and the hiring of enthusiastic young coach Willie Taggart convinced him to stay in school one more year. Backup tailback Tony Brooks-James is a track star who averaged 7.6 yards on his way to 771 yards as a sophomore.

The loss of the team's top three tight ends is a problem, but an offensive line that started four redshirt freshmen in 2016 is a year older, and talented tackle Tyrell Crosby should be back from a foot injury and added to the mix. Darren Carrington II and Charles Nelson provided talent and experience at receiver, but the Ducks could miss the game-breaking speed of Devon Allen, the Olympic hurdler who gave up football to concentrate on track after two knee injuries in the last two years.

DEFENSE A defensive line that not long ago produced first-round draft picks Arik Armstead and DeForest Buckner suddenly lacked star power in 2016. That changed this spring when Scott Pagano announced he would leave Clemson as a graduate transfer and enroll at Oregon. Other than convincing Freeman to remain in school, that was Taggart's most important recruiting job of the year.

After a year in Brady Hoke's 4-3, the Ducks moved back to a three-man front under new coordinator Jim Leavitt, who dramatically remade Colorado's defense the past two seasons. Leavitt moved sophomore Troy Dye off the edge to the weak-side inside linebacker spot, where he'll have even more room to roam. The lack of other impact veterans was reflected in a spring depth chart that often included three freshmen — cornerback Thomas Graham, nose tackle Jordon Scott and strong safety Brady Breeze — with the first unit.

SPECIALISTS Aidan Schneider is an all-conference-caliber placekicker, although his range doesn't extend much beyond 45 yards. Punter Ian Wheeler opted not to return for his senior season, although Oregon could stand to improve in that area anyway. The Ducks are never lacking for speedy candidates to return kicks and punts, and they added another one in the spring with early enrollee Darrian McNeal.

FINAL ANALYSIS In 2016, Oregon's offense slipped from elite to merely very good. The Ducks were 27th nationally in scoring at 35.4 points per game, and 18th with 6.6 yards per play. Being very good on offense didn't get it done given that Oregon was absolutely dreadful on defense, finishing 126th in the nation both scoring and total defense.

With Herbert, Freeman, Carrington and all that experience back on the offensive line, the Ducks figure to be even more explosive in Taggart's "Gulf Coast Offense," which was fourth nationally last season — at South Florida — in scoring (43.8 ppg) and sixth in yards per play (7.2). But will the Ducks be demonstrably better on defense?

The good news is that Oregon also returns a host of players on that side of the ball, too; the bad news is that those players were woefully ineffective last season. Leavitt might be one of the best in the country — the Ducks are paying him to be, at more than $1 million per season — but he may need another year to coach up the veterans and recruit more talent before Oregon is back competing for championships.



ROYCE FREEMAN

"Getting Royce Freeman to come back is like signing a five-star recruit. He's probably got something to prove."
– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	22	**Darren Carrington II (Sr.)**	83	Alex Ofodile (So.)	
WR	18	**Charles Nelson (Sr.)**	89	Darrian McNeal (Fr.)	
WR	13	Dillon Mitchell (So.)	23	Malik Lovette (So.)	
LT	73	Tyrell Crosby (Sr.)	**66**	**Brady Aiello (So.)**	
LG	68	**Shane Lemieux (So.)**	79	Evan Voeller (Sr.)	
C	55	**Jake Hanson (So.)**	75	Zach Okun (So.)	
RG	76	Jake Pisarcik (Sr.)	57	Doug Brenner (Sr.)	
RT	54	**Calvin Throckmorton (So.)**	71	Jacob Capra (Fr.)	
TE	27	Jacob Breeland (So.)	84	Cam McCormick (Fr.)	
QB	10	**Justin Herbert (So.)**	11	Travis Jonsen (So.)	
RB	21	**Royce Freeman (Sr.)**	20	Tony Brooks-James (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (8)

DE	92	**Henry Mondeaux (Sr.)**	90	Drayton Carlberg (So.)	
NT		Scott Pagano (Sr.)	**47**	**Rex Manu (Jr.)**	
DE	97	Jalen Jelks (Jr.)	74	Elijah George (Sr.)	
OLB	18	Jimmie Swain (Sr.)	42	Jonah Moi (Sr.)	
ILB	35	**Troy Dye (So.)**	39	Kaulana Apelu (Jr.)	
ILB	55	A.J. Hotchkins (Sr.)	46	Danny Mattingly (Sr.)	
CB	11	Thomas Graham Jr. (Fr.)	**14**	**Ugochukwu Amadi (Jr.)**	
CB	13	**Arrion Springs (Sr.)**	**21**	**Tyree Robinson (Sr.)**	
S	26	**Khalil Oliver (Jr.)**	19	Fotu T. Leiato II (Jr.)	
S	43	**Brenden Schooler (So.)**	27	Mattrell McGraw (Jr.)	
S	25	Brady Breeze (Fr.)	17	Juwaan Williams (Sr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	41	Aidan Schneider (Sr.)	KR	18	Charles Nelson (Sr.)
P	42	Blake Maimone (So.)	PR	22	Darren Carrington II (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Justin Herbert, 255-162-1,936-4, 17 TDs
Rushing: Royce Freeman, 168 att., 945 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Charles Nelson, 52 rec., 554 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Troy Dye, 91
Sacks: Troy Dye, 6.5
Interceptions: Brenden Schooler, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Willie Taggart
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 40-45 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Marcus Arroyo, Mario Cristobal **Defensive Coordinator:** Jim Leavitt
Eugene, OR • Autzen Stadium (54,000)

Tim Umphrey

OREGON STATE BEAVERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **65** • PAC-12 NORTH PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 3-6 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26	at Colorado State
Sept. 2	Portland State
Sept. 9	Minnesota
Sept. 16	at Washington State
Sept. 30	Washington
Oct. 7	at USC
Oct. 14	Colorado
Oct. 26	Stanford
Nov. 4	at California
Nov. 11	at Arizona
Nov. 18	Arizona State
Nov. 25	at Oregon

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 3-6 PAC-12

Sept. 1	at Minnesota		L	23-30
Sept. 17	Idaho State		W	37-7
Sept. 24	Boise State		L	24-38
Oct. 1	at Colorado		L	6-47
Oct. 8	California	(ot)	W	47-44
Oct. 15	Utah		L	14-19
Oct. 22	at Washington		L	17-41
Oct. 29	Washington State		L	31-35
Nov. 5	at Stanford		L	15-26
Nov. 12	at UCLA		L	24-38
Nov. 19	Arizona		W	42-17
Nov. 26	Oregon		W	34-24

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Isaiah Hodgins, WR, Oakley, CA
2. David Morris, S, Sherwood, OR
3. Kolby Taylor, WR, Chandler, AZ
4. Jake Luton, QB, Marysville, WA*
5. Trajon Cotton, S, Sacramento, CA
6. Craig Evans, DT, Sun Prairie, WI*
7. Justin Sattelmaier, OL, Temecula, CA*
8. Charles Watson, S, Wahiawa, HI
9. Calvin Tyler, RB, Beaumont, TX
10. Jeffrey Manning Jr., S, Lakewood, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.2 ppg	10	86
Rushing	191.7 ypg	7	49
Passing	173.8 ypg	11	110
Total	365.5 ypg	12	105
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.5 ppg	8	82
Rushing	218.0 ypg	10	102
Passing	211.2 ypg	4	44
Total	429.2 ypg	8	79
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	7	54

STAT CORNER

+1.1

Oregon State averaged 0.4 more yards per play and allowed 0.7 fewer. This combined 1.1-yard change ranked 14th in FBS.

OFFENSE The Beavers are still looking for stability and production at quarterback after another season in which they ranked near the bottom nationally in nearly every passing category and cycled through three signal-callers due to injury or performance. Though both Marcus McMaryion and Darell Garretson return, the frontrunner to win the starting job could be junior college transfer Jake Luton, who boasts a 6'7" frame and strong arm. Offensive coordinator Kevin McGiven said it was a priority to identify a starter "early," but that did not happen during or immediately after spring practice.

Running back Ryan Nall is the offense's centerpiece and the face of the program. He'll aim to hit 1,000 yards as a junior, after using his blend of power and speed to compile 951 yards (6.5 per carry) and 13 touchdowns in 2016.

The receiving corps loses do-it-all playmaker Victor Bolden but returns big-bodied Jordan Villamin and welcomes four-star early enrollee freshman Isaiah Hodgins. The wild card is the health of Seth Collins, who missed the final two games of the season after being hospitalized with an illness and whose status for 2017 remains uncertain. Tight end Noah Togiai, who is coming off a torn ACL, also provides a unique pass-catching option because of his size and athleticism.

The offensive line must replace three starters, including standout left tackle Sean Harlow. And the Beavers are turning to a unique contender at center, with former defensive lineman Sumner Houston flipping sides to snap the football for the first time since elementary school.

DEFENSE A unit that made strides in most categories in 2016 is looking for improvement up front, as the Beavers allowed 218.0 rushing yards per game and recorded 18 sacks in 2016. The defensive line returns nearly every contributor from last season and should get a boost from highly touted junior college transfer Craig Evans, a 330-pound tackle.

Linebacker is one of the more intriguing position groups, as veteran playmakers like the rangy Bright Ugwoegbu and tackling machine Manase Hungalu return, and youngsters like Andrzej Hughes-Murray, Shemar Smith and Doug Taumoelau could be primed for significant roles.

The back end loses two major pieces in cornerback Treston Decoud and safety Devin Chappell but welcomes back a Freshman All-American in cornerback Xavier Crawford, who must now match up against the opponent's best receiver. Cornerbacks Jay Irvine and Christian Wallace and safety Jalen Moore are also promising young players. The Beavers also signed seven defensive backs, including touted in-state product David Morris, in its 2017 recruiting class.

Head coach Gary Andersen verbalized his lofty defensive goals during the spring — 30 sacks and 30 turnovers.

SPECIALISTS The Beavers return punter Nick Porebski, an All-Pac-12 honorable mention selection in 2015, and Jordan Choukair, who took over field goal duties late in 2016. But they must replace Bolden, who was a huge weapon on kick returns. Trevon Bradford is an early candidate to fill that void.

FINAL ANALYSIS Following a disastrous 2–10 debut season for Andersen, Oregon State showed noticeable progress in 2016 by doubling its win total, notching three Pac-12 victories and closing the season with a blowout of Arizona and a come-from-behind win over Oregon. The Beavers identified some clear strengths, with Nall pacing a tough-minded rushing attack and a secondary spearheading a defense that ranked in the top 50 nationally in pass defense.

Though this program is still in the thick of its rebuild, there's reason for optimism in 2017. Returning to a bowl game for the first time since 2013 is not an outlandish expectation.



RYAN NALL

"It's kind of the Utah model where they want to be big and physical up front and establish their identity from the line of scrimmage out."

– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	13	Jordan Villamin (Sr.)	**18**	**Timmy Hernandez (Jr.)**
WR	**22**	**Seth Collins (Jr.)**	7	Isaiah Hodgins (Fr.)
WR	2	Hunter Jarmon (Sr.)	19	Trevon Bradford (So.)
LT	**73**	**Blake Brandel (So.)**	60	Will Hopkins (Sr.)
LG	**63**	**Gus Lavaka (So.)**	51	Kammy Delp (Jr.)
C	52	Sumner Houston (Jr.)	76	Yanni Demogerontas (Jr.)
RG	64	Fred Lauina (Sr.)	72	Miki Fifita (So.)
RT	67	Trent Moore (Jr.)		Justin Sattelmaier (So.)
TE	81	Noah Togiai (Jr.)	82	Tuli Wily-Matagi (So.)
QB	6	Jake Luton (Jr.)	**3**	**Marcus McMaryion (Jr.)**
RB	**34**	**Ryan Nall (Jr.)**	21	Artavis Pierce (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	**95**	**Baker Pritchard (Sr.)**	97	Kalani Vakameilalo (Jr.)
DT	99	Elu Aydon (So.)		Craig Evans (Jr.)
DE	90	Phillip Napoleon (Sr.)	93	Titus Failauga (Sr.)
OLB	**47**	**Bright Ugwoegbu (Jr.)**	94	Joah Robinett (So.)
ILB	49	Andrzej Hughes-Murray (So.)	42	Doug Taumoelau (Fr.)
ILB	**55**	**Manase Hungalu (Sr.)**	50	Wesley Payne (Sr.)
OLB	32	Jonathan Willis (Jr.)	41	Shemar Smith (So.)
CB	**22**	**Xavier Crawford (So.)**	24	Jay Irvine (So.)
CB	4	Dwayne Williams (Jr.)	29	Christian Wallace (Fr.)
SS	**3**	**Brandon Arnold (Sr.)**	10	Omar Hicks-Onu (So.)
FS	33	Jalen Moore (So.)	30	Drew Kell (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	46	Jordan Choukair (So.)	KR	19	Trevon Bradford (So.)
P	31	Nick Porebski (Sr.)	PR	19	Trevon Bradford (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Marcus McMaryion, 170-101-1,286-5, 10 TDs
Rushing: Ryan Nall, 147 att., 951 yds., 13 TDs
Receiving: Seth Collins, 36 rec., 418 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Manase Hungalu, 83
Sacks: Bright Ugwoegbu, 5.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Gary Andersen
Record at School: 6-18 (2 years)
Career Record: 55-56 (9 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kevin McGiven
Defensive Coordinator: Kevin Clune
Corvallis, OR • Reser Stadium (45,674)

Peter Brouillet

STANFORD CARDINAL

NATIONAL FORECAST: **17** • PAC-12 NORTH PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-3, 6-3 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	26	vs. Rice #
Sept.	9	at USC
Sept.	16	at San Diego State
Sept.	23	UCLA
Sept.	30	Arizona State
Oct.	7	at Utah
Oct.	14	Oregon
Oct.	26	at Oregon State
Nov.	4	at Washington State
Nov.	10	Washington
Nov.	18	California
Nov.	25	Notre Dame

#Sydney, Australia

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 6-3 PAC-12

Sept.	2	Kansas State	W	26-13
Sept.	17	USC	W	27-10
Sept.	24	at UCLA	W	22-13
Sept.	30	at Washington	L	6-44
Oct.	8	Washington State	L	16-42
Oct.	15	at Notre Dame	W	17-10
Oct.	22	Colorado	L	5-10
Oct.	29	at Arizona	W	34-10
Nov.	5	Oregon State	W	26-15
Nov.	12	at Oregon	W	52-27
Nov.	19	at California	W	45-31
Nov.	26	Rice	W	41-17
Dec.	30	vs. North Carolina #	W	25-23

#Sun Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Foster Sarell, OT, Graham, WA
2. Walker Little, OT, Houston, TX
3. Davis Mills, QB, Duluth, GA
4. Colby Parkinson, TE, Simi Valley, CA
5. Paulson Adebo, CB, Mansfield, TX
6. Osiris St. Brown, WR, Brea, CA
7. Connor Wedington, RB/WR, Lake Tapps, WA
8. Sione Lund, RB, Holladay, UT
9. Ryan Johnson, DE, Axis, AL
10. Dalyn Wade-Perry, DT, Englewood, NJ

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.3 ppg	9	83
Rushing	208.9 ypg	4	35
Passing	158.2 ypg	12	115
Total	367.1 ypg	11	103
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	20.4 ppg	2	18
Rushing	144.5 ypg	5	38
Passing	223.6 ypg	5	61
Total	368.1 ypg	4	38
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.15	6	49

STAT CORNER

+8.4

Stanford's field position margin was plus-8.4 yards per drive, third in FBS. The Cardinal were 10th in three-and-outs. That helped.

OFFENSE Priority No. 1 is knowing exactly when returning starting quarterback Keller Chryst will be available. He injured his knee during Stanford's 25–23 win over North Carolina in the Sun Bowl, leaving Ryan Burns and touted 2016 recruit K.J. Costello as the only scholarship quarterbacks available in the spring. Burns began 2016 as the starter but was unseated by Chryst — who helped the Cardinal go 6–0 during that stretch with wins over Oregon, Cal and the aforementioned bowl game.

"We won't rush it," coach David Shaw says of Chryst's status. "If he's not 100 percent at the beginning of training camp, that's fine. We're not going to hit the panic button. He's doing really well. … We're gearing toward him participating relatively early, if not Day 1 of training camp."

Regardless of who wins the job, the quarterback will be handing off to one of the most explosive players in the conference in Bryce Love (111 carries, 783 yards, three touchdowns). Used primarily as a change-of-pace option to Christian McCaffrey, Love is poised to take over as the primary back with McCaffrey's departure. "Bryce Love will be one of the most dynamic running backs in college football," Shaw says.

Another stout offensive line — headlined by four returners with quality starting experience — should pave the way for Love.

While the Cardinal will miss the speed and reliability of receiver Michael Rector, JJ Arcega-Whiteside (team-high five receiving touchdowns) and Trenton Irwin (team-high 37 receptions) make a nice pair. Look for Dalton Schultz, who had 23 catches last season, to build off of those numbers at tight end.

DEFENSE The defensive line will once again be an issue as the Cardinal look to replace backfield menace Solomon Thomas. Defensive tackle Harrison Phillips has the most experience of the group after posting 6.5 sacks and 9.5 tackles for a loss in 2016.

The centerpiece of the front seven is outside linebacker Joey Alfieri, who is one of the most versatile defenders the Cardinal have had in years. He posted 5.0 sacks and 10.5 tackles for a loss last year, and the coaching staff spent much of the spring working with him in a hybrid inside/outside linebacker role to take full advantage of his impressive athleticism.

Where the Cardinal defense should really excel is in the secondary, where Stanford can go eight deep with talent and experience. It's a unit that could be one of the best in the country. Quenton Meeks and Alijah Holder make up one of the top cornerback tandems in the league, and Justin Reid is a returner at strong safety. Brandon Simmons also has some starting experience at free safety.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Jet Toner has big shoes to fill in replacing Conrad Ukropina, the school's all-time leader in field goal percentage. The sophomore didn't make any appearances in 2016 but was highly regarded coming out of Hawaii. Jake Bailey returns at punter after finishing fourth in the conference last year with an average of 43.5 yards. Look for Love and Jay Tyler to contribute on returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Cardinal have reached a point where going 10–3, as they did in 2016, actually feels like a down year. But two of those losses were to the North Division champ (Washington) and the South Division champ (Colorado). The Huskies show no sign of slowing down in the North, and USC looks to be rising again in the South. The Cardinal will have to find a way to beat Washington if they hope to return to the Pac-12 title game.



BRYCE LOVE

"They're good enough to beat anybody if they get good quarterback play, but I'm not sure if you can count on that every week."

– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	2	**Trenton Irwin (Jr.)**	8	Donald Stewart (So.)
WR	19	JJ Arcega-Whiteside (So.)	4	Jay Tyler (So.)
LT	64	**David Bright (Sr.)**	74	Devery Hamilton (Fr.)
LG	63	**Nate Herbig (So.)**	62	Austin Maihen (So.)
C	73	**Jesse Burkett (Jr.)**	65	Brian Chaffin (So.)
RG	54	Nick Wilson (So.)	71	Brandon Fanaika (Jr.)
RT	75	**A.T. Hall (Jr.)**	77	**Casey Tucker (Sr.)**
TE	9	**Dalton Schultz (Jr.)**	82	Kaden Smith (Fr.)
QB	10	**Keller Chryst (Jr.)**	3	K.J. Costello (Fr.)
RB	20	Bryce Love (Jr.)	22	Cameron Scarlett (So.)
FB	35	Daniel Marx (Sr.)	6	Reagan Williams (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	80	Eric Cotton (Sr.)	51	Jovan Swann (Fr.)
DT	66	**Harrison Phillips (Sr.)**	57	Michael Williams (Fr.)
DE	97	Dylan Jackson (So.)	91	Thomas Schaffer (So.)
OLB	32	**Joey Alfieri (Jr.)**	21	Curtis Robinson (So.)
ILB	20	**Bobby Okereke (Jr.)**	27	Sean Barton (So.)
ILB	44	**Kevin Palma (Sr.)**	31	Mustafa Branch (Jr.)
OLB	34	**Peter Kalambayi (Sr.)**	52	Casey Toohill (So.)
CB	13	Alijah Holder (Jr.)	5	Frank Buncom (So.)
CB	24	**Quenton Meeks (Jr.)**	4	**Alameen Murphy (Jr.)**
SS	8	**Justin Reid (Jr.)**	28	Denzel Franklin (Jr.)
FS	2	Brandon Simmons (Jr.)	9	Ben Edwards (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	26	Jet Toner (Fr.)	KR	20	Bryce Love (Jr.)
P	14	Jake Bailey (Jr.)	PR	4	Jay Tyler (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ryan Burns, 167-102-1,511-7, 5 TDs
Rushing: Bryce Love, 111 att., 783 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Trenton Irwin, 37 rec., 442 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Justin Reid, 57
Sacks: Harrison Phillips, 6.5
Interceptions: Joey Alfieri, 2; Quenton Meeks, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: David Shaw
Record at School: 64-17 (6 years)
Career Record: 64-17 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Bloomgren
Defensive Coordinator: Lance Anderson
Stanford, CA • Stanford Stadium (50,424)

Peter Brouillet

WASHINGTON HUSKIES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **4** • PAC-12 NORTH PREDICTIONS: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **12-1, 8-1 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Rutgers	
Sept. 9	Montana	
Sept. 16	Fresno State	
Sept. 23	at Colorado	
Sept. 30	at Oregon State	
Oct. 7	California	
Oct. 14	at Arizona State	
Oct. 28	UCLA	
Nov. 4	Oregon	
Nov. 10	at Stanford	
Nov. 18	Utah	
Nov. 25	Washington State	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 12-2, 8-1 PAC-12

Sept. 3	Rutgers	W	48-13
Sept. 10	Idaho	W	59-14
Sept. 17	Portland State	W	41-3
Sept. 24	at Arizona	(ot) W	35-28
Sept. 30	Stanford	W	44-6
Oct. 8	at Oregon	W	70-21
Oct. 22	Oregon State	W	41-17
Oct. 29	at Utah	W	31-24
Nov. 5	at California	W	66-27
Nov. 12	USC	L	13-26
Nov. 19	Arizona State	W	44-18
Nov. 25	at Washington State	W	45-17
Dec. 2	vs. Colorado #	W	41-10
Dec. 31	vs. Alabama %	L	7-24

#Santa Clara %Peach Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Salvon Ahmed, RB, Kirkland, WA
2. Hunter Bryant, TE, Issaquah, WA
3. Elijah Molden, CB, West Linn, OR
4. Henry Bainivalu, OL, Sammamish, WA
5. Ty Jones, WR, Provo, UT
6. Terrell Bynum, WR, Long Beach, CA
7. Keith Taylor, CB, Long Beach, CA
8. Brandon McKinney, S, Orange, CA
9. Ariel Ngata, LB, Reno, NV
10. Alex Cook, WR, Sacramento, CA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	41.8 ppg	1	8
Rushing	198.1 ypg	6	44
Passing	258.8 ypg	7	41
Total	456.9 ypg	5	32
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	17.7 ppg	1	8
Rushing	133.9 ypg	2	28
Passing	182.9 ypg	1	15
Total	316.9 ypg	1	12
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+18	+1.29	1	1

STAT CORNER

+8.9

Vegas consistently underestimated Washington. The Huskies overachieved their spread by 8.9 points per game, tops in FBS.

OFFENSE The Huskies should have no trouble moving the ball and running up points. They have quarterback stability in Jake Browning, a two-year returning starter and still just a junior. He directed the league's highest-scoring offense (41.8 ppg), threw a league-record-tying 43 touchdown passes and was selected conference Offensive Player of the Year. He comes off shoulder surgery that limited him in spring practice, but it shouldn't keep him from making another run at a Heisman Trophy after finishing sixth.

The Huskies are loaded at tailback with the league's best one-two punch in junior Myles Gaskin and senior Lavon Coleman, who combined for 2,200 yards last season. Gaskin, the returning first-team All-Pac-12 pick, uses an uncanny blend of balance and speed to get his yards; Coleman is a power runner who bulled his way to a school-record 7.5 yards per carry.

The Huskies' veteran line is poised for a breakout season. The centerpiece is 6'8", 320-pound junior left tackle Trey Adams, who has the NFL written all over him and carries such a lean frame he resembles a gigantic tight end. Huge and mobile, he was a first-team All-Pac-12 selection and enters his third season as a starter. Senior center Coleman Shelton, a second-team All-Pac-12 pick, enters his fourth season as a starter and is a highly dependable player — he's started at all five line positions.

If there's a question mark on offense, it's at wide receiver. The Huskies have a good one in senior Dante Pettis, who had 53 receptions and 15 scores last season, but a reliable second option needs to step forward.

DEFENSE Vita Vea, a 6'5", 334-pound junior defensive tackle, was projected as a second-round NFL Draft pick but decided he wasn't ready. He might be the only one who felt that way. While starting just five games last season, Vea made enough of an impression that he was named second-team All-Pac-12. He will team with junior defensive tackle Greg Gaines, deceptively good at stopping the run, to form another stout front wall.

The strength of the Huskies' defense shifts from the secondary to the middle row. Three starting linebackers return, notably senior inside linebacker Azeem Victor, a highly aggressive player who was named first-team All-Pac-12 even after missing four-plus games with a broken leg. Victor will start for a third consecutive season alongside fellow senior inside linebacker Keishawn Bierria, a second-team All-Pac-12 pick.

The secondary lost three highly decorated players. The Huskies return a budding star in sophomore free safety Taylor Rapp, but their biggest challenge will be to find two new cornerbacks, which could determine this team's ultimate fate.

SPECIALISTS Senior Tristan Vizcaino returns as both a dependable starter and untested newcomer. As the regular punter, he averaged 40.7 yards, dropping 15 kicks inside the 20. He takes over the placekicking with only a lone successful extra point to his name. The shifty Pettis remains one of the nation's most feared punt returners, scoring a school-record five times in his career.

FINAL ANALYSIS After a College Football Playoff appearance, coach Chris Peterson returns 13 starters, including the reigning Pac-12 Offensive Player of the Year in Browning and a middle linebacker in Victor who might be the league's best defensive player. Petersen continues to recruit well. He has another soft non-conference slate and doesn't have USC on the league schedule. If UW can restock the secondary and keep the momentum going, the Huskies will be a serious contender — both in the Pac-12 and nationally — again.



JAKE BROWNING

"Those guys showed against Alabama they were the real deal on defense. They gave up the one big play that killed 'em, but they were right there."
– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	8	**Dante Pettis (Sr.)**	21	Quentin Pounds (So.)
WR	6	Chico McClatcher (Jr.)	19	Andre Baccellia (So.)
WR	20	Ty Jones (Fr.)	12	Aaron Fuller (So.)
LT	72	**Trey Adams (Jr.)**	70	Jared Hilbers (So.)
LG	56	Nick Harris (So.)	59	Henry Roberts (So.)
C	79	**Coleman Shelton (Sr.)**	71	Matt James (Jr.)
RG	73	Andrew Kirkland (Sr.)	75	Jesse Sosebee (Jr.)
RT	58	**Kaleb McGary (Jr.)**	77	Devin Burleson (So.)
TE	88	**Drew Sample (Jr.)**	98	Will Dissly (Sr.)
QB	3	**Jake Browning (Jr.)**	11	K.J. Carta-Samuels (Jr.)
RB	9	**Myles Gaskin (Jr.)**	22	Lavon Coleman (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	92	Jaylen Johnson (Jr.)	95	Levi Onwuzurike (Fr.)
NT	50	Vita Vea (Jr.)	91	Ricky McCoy (So.)
DT	99	**Greg Gaines (Jr.)**	96	Shane Bowman (Jr.)
OLB	29	**Connor O'Brien (Sr.)**	40	Camilo Eifler (Fr.)
ILB	36	**Azeem Victor (Sr.)**	15	DJ Beavers (So.)
ILB	7	**Keishawn Bierria (Sr.)**	25	Ben Burr-Kirven (Jr.)
OLB	16	Amandre Williams (Fr.)	17	Tevis Bartlett (Jr.)
CB	23	Jordan Miller (Jr.)	19	Brandon Lewis (Jr.)
CB	6	Byron Murphy (Fr.)	4	Austin Joyner (So.)
SS	14	**Jojo McIntosh (Jr.)**	24	Ezekiel Turner (Sr.)
FS	21	**Taylor Rapp (So.)**	27	Trevor Walker (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Tristan Vizcaino (Sr.)	KR	4	Austin Joyner (So.)
P	43	Tristan Vizcaino (Sr.)	PR	8	Dante Pettis (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jake Browning, 391-243-3,430-9, 43 TDs
Rushing: Myles Gaskin, 237 att., 1,373 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Dante Pettis, 53 rec., 822 yds., 15 TDs
Tackles: Keishawn Bierria, 70
Sacks: Vita Vea, 5.0
Interceptions: Taylor Rapp, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Chris Petersen
Record at School: 27-14 (3 years)
Career Record: 119-26 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Matt Lubick, Jonathan Smith
Defensive Coordinators: Pete Kwiatkowski,
Jimmy Lake • Seattle, WA • Husky Stadium (70,138)

Craig Mitchelldyer

WASHINGTON STATE COUGARS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **28** • PAC-12 NORTH PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 5-4 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Montana State
Sept. 9	Boise State
Sept. 16	Oregon State
Sept. 23	Nevada
Sept. 29	USC
Oct. 7	at Oregon
Oct. 13	at California
Oct. 21	Colorado
Oct. 28	at Arizona
Nov. 4	Stanford
Nov. 11	at Utah
Nov. 25	at Washington

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 7-2 PAC-12

Sept. 3	Eastern Washington	L	42-45
Sept. 10	at Boise State	L	28-31
Sept. 17	Idaho	W	56-6
Oct. 1	Oregon	W	51-33
Oct. 8	at Stanford	W	42-16
Oct. 15	UCLA	W	27-21
Oct. 22	at Arizona State	W	37-32
Oct. 29	at Oregon State	W	35-31
Nov. 5	Arizona	W	69-7
Nov. 12	California	W	56-21
Nov. 19	at Colorado	L	24-38
Nov. 25	Washington	L	17-45
Dec. 27	vs. Minnesota #	L	12-17

#Holiday Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jamire Calvin, WR, Pasadena, CA
2. Abraham Lucas, OL, Everett, WA
3. Robert Valencia, OL, Daly City, CA*
4. Connor Neville, QB, Wilsonville, OR
5. Josh Talbott, DB, Long Beach, CA
6. Antony White Jr., WR, Miami, FL
7. Jonathan Nathaniel, OL, Chandler, AZ
8. Fa'avae Fa'avae, LB, Santa Ana, CA
9. Caleb Perry, RB, Seattle, WA
10. Preston Hendry, DE, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.2 ppg	2	18
Rushing	120.0 ypg	11	114
Passing	362.5 ypg	1	3
Total	482.5 ypg	3	18
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.4 ppg	6	50
Rushing	134.2 ypg	3	29
Passing	271.7 ypg	9	112
Total	405.9 ypg	7	62
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.46	2	28

STAT CORNER

47

Wazzu forced eight turnovers in 2014, the year before Alex Grinch's hire as defensive coordinator. The last two years: 47 takeaways.

OFFENSE When asked if Washington State might have the best running back unit in the Pac-12, position coach Jim Mastro replies, "I thought we did last year."

It may hard be for those who associate head coach Mike Leach's Air Raid offense with prolific wide receivers to believe that the running backs are so good, and just as strange for a team returning a three-year starter and all-conference performer at quarterback to be so concerned about the ground game. But as traditionalist WSU fans have raged for years for Leach to "Run the ball more!" after every loss, the Cougars have quietly put together a group of rushers who rank among the best on the west coast.

Gerard Wicks, Jamal Morrow and James Williams combined to rush for 1,645 yards and 22 touchdowns last season, while adding an additional 1,014 yards and seven scores catching passes — most of them short little shuttle passes that more or less function as run plays.

Those running backs, plus Keith Harrington, who was injured last year but has made big plays in the past, will run behind an offensive line that returns three starters, including 6'9", 370-pound monster left guard Cody O'Connell, a unanimous All-America selection in 2016.

Record-setting quarterback Luke Falk returns for his senior season and once again has a talented group of receivers to target, led by Tavares Martin.

DEFENSE In Year 3 under defensive coordinator Alex Grinch — who is still under 40 — the Cougars have become faster, leaner and added depth and talent at every position.

Except, perhaps, along the defensive line. Star defensive line coach Joe Salave'a left for Oregon, and his last couple of recruiting classes were not as chock-full of mammoth defenders as the first couple. The result is that the Cougars really will bet on speed, with linebackers moving down to play at the end positions and natural defensive ends sliding inside.

The good news is that the linebacker corps has never been deeper, and the secondary has never been more athletic. Senior Peyton Pelluer will be starting at middle linebacker for the third straight year and is good for about 100 tackles per season. Frankie Luvu and Isaac Dotson provide athleticism beside Pelluer in the second level.

Robert Taylor and Jalen Thompson proved to be athletic playmakers in their first year at WSU, and the two will hold down the back end of the Cougars' defense. In front of them, junior cornerback Darrien Molton has been a starter ever since he arrived at WSU, and sophomore Marcus Strong appears to have supplanted longtime starter Marcellus Pippins at the other corner spot.

SPECIALISTS Erik Powell is one of the country's most consistent field goal kickers — just not always in a good way. After a stellar sophomore season, he began last season by missing his first five kicks — for a while WSU was the only team in the country without a field goal. Powell turned it around and finished 9-for-15 on the season. The Cougars will need the good Powell in 2017, since he may also handle punting duties. Taylor was an explosive return man in 2016 and will likely continue those duties this season.

FINAL ANALYSIS With 17 wins over the last two seasons, the turnaround of the WSU football program is basically complete. Now, Leach just has to keep his pirate ship headed in the right direction. Last year the Cougars stayed in the hunt for a spot in the Pac-12 Championship Game all the way up until the last game of the regular season. With Falk and a number of playmakers returning, fans have plenty of reasons to expect to contend again in 2017.



LUKE FALK

"They get so much attention for the Air Raid stuff, they're probably a little bit underrated for how well they run the ball."

– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	5	Isaiah Johnson-Mack (So.)	12	Dezmon Patmon (So.)	
WR	15	**Robert Lewis (Sr.)**	85	Easop Winston (Jr.)	
WR	17	Kyle Sweet (Jr.)	89	Brandon Arconado (So.)	
WR	8	**Tavares Martin Jr. (Jr.)**	88	C.J. Dimry (Sr.)	
LT	60	**Andre Dillard (Jr.)**	79	Cedric Bigge-Duren (So.)	
LG	76	**Cody O'Connell (Sr.)**	55	Noah Osur-Myers (So.)	
C	69	Frederick Mauigoa (So.)	55	Noah Osur-Myers (So.)	
RG	75	B.J. Salmonson (Sr.)	73	Robert Valencia (Jr.)	
RT	61	**Cole Madison (Sr.)**	79	Cedric Bigge-Duren (So.)	
QB	4	**Luke Falk (Sr.)**	3	Tyler Hilinski (So.)	
RB	25	Jamal Morrow (Sr.)	**23**	**Gerard Wicks (Sr.)**	

DEFENSE (9)

DE	50	**Hercules Mata'afa (Jr.)**	52	Kingston Fernandez (Jr.)
DT	90	**Daniel Ekuale (Sr.)**	95	Ngalu Tapa (Jr.)
DE	30	Nnamdi Oguayo (So.)	55	Derek Moore (So.)
RSH	33	Dylan Hanser (Sr.)	45	Logan Tago (Jr.)
MLB	47	**Peyton Pelluer (Sr.)**	13	Jahad Woods (Fr.)
WLB	51	**Frankie Luvu (Sr.)**	**31**	**Isaac Dotson (Sr.)**
NB	26	Hunter Dale (Jr.)	10	Kirkland Parker (Sr.)
CB	37	Marcus Strong (So.)	**27**	**Marcellus Pippins (Sr.)**
CB	3	**Darrien Molton (Jr.)**	36	D'Jimon Jones (Fr.)
FS	2	**Robert Taylor (Sr.)**	38	Zaire Webb (Fr.)
SS	34	**Jalen Thompson (So.)**	21	Sean Harper (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	46	Erik Powell (Sr.)	KR	2	Robert Taylor (Sr.)
P	46	Erik Powell (Sr.)	PR	2	Robert Taylor (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Luke Falk, 633-443-4,468-11, 38 TDs
Rushing: James Williams, 102 att., 584 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Tavares Martin Jr., 64 rec., 728 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Peyton Pelluer, 93
Sacks: Hercules Mata'afa, 5.0
Interceptions: Isaac Dotson, 2; Marcellus Pippins, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Leach
Record at School: 29-34 (5 years)
Career Record: 113-77 (15 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Leach
Defensive Coordinator: Alex Grinch
Pullman, WA • Martin Stadium (32,952)

AP

ARIZONA WILDCATS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **66** • PAC-12 SOUTH PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 2-7 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Northern Arizona
Sept.	9	Houston
Sept.	15	at UTEP
Sept.	22	Utah
Oct.	7	at Colorado
Oct.	14	UCLA
Oct.	21	at California
Oct.	28	Washington State
Nov.	4	at USC
Nov.	11	Oregon State
Nov.	18	at Oregon
Nov.	25	at Arizona State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 1-8 PAC-12

Sept.	3	vs. BYU #	L	16-18
Sept.	10	Grambling	W	31-21
Sept.	17	Hawaii	W	47-28
Sept.	24	Washington	(ot) L	28-35
Oct.	1	at UCLA	L	24-45
Oct.	8	at Utah	L	23-36
Oct.	15	USC	L	14-48
Oct.	29	Stanford	L	10-34
Nov.	5	at Washington State	L	7-69
Nov.	12	Colorado	L	24-49
Nov.	19	at Oregon State	L	17-42
Nov.	25	Arizona State	W	56-35

#Glendale

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Nathan Tilford, RB, Ontario, CA
2. Jalen Harris, DE, Mesa, AZ
3. Colin Schooler, LB, Mission Viejo, CA
4. Tony Fields, LB, Las Vegas, NV
5. Rhedi Short, FS, Los Angeles, CA
6. Drew Dixon, WR, Tucson, AZ
7. Bryce Wolma, TE, Saline, MI
8. Scott Young, S, La Mesa, CA
9. Kurtis Brown, DT, Bakersfield, CA
10. Brian Casteel, WR, Covina, CA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.8 ppg	12	100
Rushing	235.0 ypg	1	19
Passing	178.1 ypg	10	108
Total	413.1 ypg	8	67
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	38.3 ppg	9	118
Rushing	194.2 ypg	9	83
Passing	275.2 ypg	11	117
Total	469.3 ypg	9	115
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.58	12	112

STAT CORNER

-10

Vegas never caught up to Arizona's collapse. The Wildcats underachieved the point spread by 10 points per game, 127th in FBS.

OFFENSE The Wildcats were last in the Pac-12 in scoring last year, and that ineptitude has to change for Arizona to improve a 1–8 conference record. Quarterbacks Brandon Dawkins and Khalil Tate ended spring practice in a too-close-to-call battle. Dawkins is an explosive runner but an erratic passer. Unfortunately for Arizona, Tate has similar tendencies. Dawkins rushed for 183 yards in a victory over Arizona State but completed only three passes in that game. He has also been sidelined by injuries three times in two seasons.

Sophomore tailback J.J. Taylor might be the club's top player. He missed eight games with a broken ankle last year but left an impression that he could be a game-changer. He'll likely share time with senior Nick Wilson, who gained 1,375 yards in 2014 but has since been limited by injuries. Freshman Nathan Tilford, who was impressive in spring camp, makes running back the team's deepest position.

The Wildcats are thin at receiver. The only returning receiver to contribute significantly is diminutive Shun Brown, a 5'8", 175-pound junior. Behind him, things are troublesome.

Tackles Layth Friekh and Michael Eletise, guards Jacob Alsadek and Gerhard de Beer and center Nathan Eldridge have the size and experience to maintain Arizona's running game productivity; the Wildcats led the Pac-12 in rushing with 235.0 yards per game a year ago. This year, however, coach Rich Rodriguez is seeking more balance, which means Dawkins and Tate must complete far more than last year's combined rate of 55.1 percent of their passes.

DEFENSE After struggling in the secondary for two years, the Wildcats have finally established depth and production in the back end. Starting cornerbacks Jace Whittaker and Dane Cruikshank are now battle-tested. Safeties Demetrius Flannigan-Fowles and Isaiah Hayes are considered strengths. If Arizona uses five deep backs, sophomore Tristan Cooper has significant experience.

Arizona's recruiting failures of the last five years show up most clearly on the defensive line. The Wildcats still don't have enough size to hold up against quality offenses. Sophomore end Justin Belknap and senior tackle Parker Zellers, both 247 pounds, have been full-time starters even though they are under-sized. Defensive line coach Vince Amey is hopeful that junior Larry Tharpe Jr., who is 6'5", 275 pounds, will be ready for full-time work. Sione Taufahema, a 310-pound junior college transfer, will be given a shot to play regularly on the interior line. Depth is a problem, as is putting pressure on opposing quarterbacks.

At times during spring drills, it appeared that three freshmen — Jacob Colacion, Jose Ramirez and Tony Fields II — were probable starters at linebacker. They would join oft-injured DeAndre' Miller.

SPECIALISTS Junior Josh Pollack was both punter and placekicker last year and was merely adequate. He'll be challenged by incoming freshman placekicker Lucas Havrisik. Veterans Jake Glatting and Matt Aragon are pushing for time at punter. The return game has not been productive of late.

FINAL ANALYSIS Arizona allowed 44.8 points per game in its eight Pac-12 losses. Improving the defense is the top priority. Rich Rodriguez hired two new defensive coaches, but the defensive line remains under-sized, and the linebacking group is freshman-laden. Almost as worrisome, Arizona averaged only 22.6 points in Pac-12 games.

Rodriguez's contract buyout would be $5.1 million if new athletic director Dave Heeke made a change. This roster is not built to shine in 2017, but, if all goes well, 2018 could be promising. Sweeping the three non-conference games against NAU, Houston and UTEP seems imperative for Arizona to have a winning season.



BRANDON DAWKINS

"It will help them to have basically their entire offensive line back, but I question whether they're going to be good enough at quarterback."

– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	6	**Shun Brown (Jr.)**	80	Shawn Poindexter (Sr.)
WR	3	Cam Denson (Sr.)	9	Tony Ellison (Jr.)
WR	2	Tyrell Johnson (Sr.)	18	Cedric Peterson (So.)
LT	58	**Layth Friekh (Sr.)**	74	Alex Kosinski (So.)
LG	67	**Gerhard de Beer (Sr.)**	69	**Christian Boettcher (Jr.)**
C	64	**Nathan Eldridge (So)**	55	Levi Walton (Jr.)
RG	78	**Jacob Alsadek (Sr.)**	76	Cody Creason (So)
RT	75	Michael Eletise (Fr.)	54	Bryson Cain (Fr.)
TE	8	Trevor Wood (Jr.)	33	Drew Dixon (Fr.)
QB	13	Brandon Dawkins (Jr.)	14	Khalil Tate (So.)
RB	28	Nick Wilson (Sr.)	23	J.J. Taylor (Fr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	86	**Justin Belknap (So.)**	60	Luca Bruno (Sr.)
DT	93	**Parker Zellers (Sr.)**	91	Finton Connolly (So.)
DT	98	Larry Tharpe Jr. (Jr.)	99	Sione Taufahema (Jr.)
OLB	32	**DeAndre' Miller (Sr.)**	58	Tre Tyler (Jr.)
ILB	40	Jose Ramirez (Fr.)	18	Brandon Rutt (Jr.)
ILB	50	Tony Fields II (Fr.)	5	Gavin Robertson Jr. (Fr.)
OLB	34	Jacob Colacion (Fr.)	17	Jalen Harris (Fr.)
CB	17	**Jace Whittaker (Jr.)**	29	**Jarvis McCall Jr. (Sr.)**
CB	9	**Dane Cruikshank (Sr.)**	15	Kwesi Mashack (Sr.)
SS	6	**D. Flannigan-Fowles (Jr.)**	20	Chacho Ulloa (So.)
FS	21	Isaiah Hayes (So.)	31	Tristan Cooper (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	30	Josh Pollack (Jr.)	KR	2	Tyrell Johnson (Sr.)
P	26	Matt Aragon (So.)	PR	9	Tony Ellison (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brandon Dawkins, 182-98-1,348-6, 8 TDs
Rushing: Brandon Dawkins, 131 att., 944 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Shun Brown, 29 rec., 521 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Demetrius Flannigan-Fowles, 78
Sacks: DeAndre' Miller, 3.0, Parker Zellers, 3.0
Interceptions: Two players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Rich Rodriguez
Record at School: 36-29 (5 years)
Career Record: 156-113-2 (23 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Calvin Magee, Rod Smith
Defensive Coordinator: Marcel Yates
Tucson, AZ • Arizona Stadium (55,675)

AP

ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **53** • PAC-12 SOUTH PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 2-7 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	New Mexico State
Sept.	9	San Diego State
Sept.	16	at Texas Tech
Sept.	23	Oregon
Sept.	30	at Stanford
Oct.	14	Washington
Oct.	21	at Utah
Oct.	28	USC
Nov.	4	Colorado
Nov.	11	at UCLA
Nov.	18	at Oregon State
Nov.	25	Arizona

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 2-7 PAC-12

Sept.	3	Northern Arizona	W	44-13
Sept.	10	Texas Tech	W	68-55
Sept.	16	at UTSA	W	32-28
Sept.	24	California	W	51-41
Oct.	1	at USC	L	20-41
Oct.	8	UCLA	W	23-20
Oct.	15	at Colorado	L	16-40
Oct.	22	Washington State	L	32-37
Oct.	29	at Oregon	L	35-54
Nov.	10	Utah	L	26-49
Nov.	19	at Washington	L	18-44
Nov.	25	at Arizona	L	35-56

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Eno Benjamin, RB, Wylie, TX
2. Alex Perry, DB, Las Vegas, NV
3. Tyler Johnson, DL, Gilbert, AZ
4. Ryan Kelley, QB, Chandler, AZ
5. K.J. Jarrell, DB, Scottsdale, AZ
6. Trelon Smith, RB, Houston, TX
7. Evan Fields, DB, Oklahoma City, OK
8. Kyle Soelle, LB, Scottsdale, AZ
9. D.J. Davidson, DL, Mesa, AZ
10. Curtis Hodges, WR, Mesa, AZ

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.3 ppg	6	40
Rushing	131.5 ypg	10	112
Passing	259.3 ypg	6	39
Total	390.8 ypg	9	81
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	39.8 ppg	10	124
Rushing	163.1 ypg	7	56
Passing	357.4 ypg	12	128
Total	520.5 ypg	12	127
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.33	11	93

STAT CORNER

-1.4

ASU gained 0.6 fewer yards per play and allowed 0.8 more than in '15. This margin change of -1.4 was sixth worst in FBS.

OFFENSE Even as the Sun Devils have gone through significant schematic changes in each of the last two offseasons, Todd Graham says the philosophy has not changed. "We're a spread, no-huddle, 11 personnel, run, play-action pass team," the ASU coach says. Though that may be factually true in a broad sense, the Sun Devils looked substantially different in 2016 following a coordinator change, and they will again in a transitional 2017. Former Alabama wide receivers coach Billy Napier has replaced Chip Lindsey, as Lindsey bolted Tempe for the same role at Auburn after just one season.

An offense marked by stability in Graham's first four seasons has since meandered. Under Napier, the Sun Devils are incorporating more pro-style formations, will likely move their quarterbacks under center more and have a greater utility for tight ends. It's quite a bit different from what Lindsey ran, and Jay Norvell before him.

Selecting a quarterback will ultimately determine what areas of ASU's expansive playbook are most utilized. Returning starter Manny Wilkins is trying to hold off Alabama transfer Blake Barnett. Either way, they'll have a tandem of experienced and capable senior running backs (Demario Richard and Kalen Ballage) to hand the ball to, a sophomore wide receiver (N'Keal Harry) who broke the school record for receptions by a freshman to throw to, and a maturing offensive line. The offense should show signs of improvement but still not be especially potent.

DEFENSE After running his own defense for 11 seasons, Graham is handing the keys over to veteran coordinator Phil Bennett, who last had the same job at Baylor. ASU finished last nationally in passing yards allowed in each of the previous two seasons, a failure particularly stunning when contrasted against what preceded it. The Sun Devils had consecutive 10-win seasons in 2013 and '14 and placed five members of their secondary on the first- or second-team all-conference teams over that span.

Bennett has his work cut out for him considering the Sun Devils haven't received an infusion of junior college or Division I transfers to help stabilize their secondary. Instead, they're working to simplify the scheme and become more fundamentally sound, as the Sun Devils were the worst tackling team in the country according to at least one advanced metric. Senior Marcus Ball and junior Armand Perry are key players at safety, and junior Kareem Orr is the team's best cornerback by a wide margin.

ASU gets better moving closer to the line of scrimmage, with a good and experienced linebacker trio of Christian Sam, D.J. Calhoun and Koron Crump. Calhoun and senior tackle Tashon Smallwood have the most experience on the team, with 38 games played. Junior end JoJo Wicker is the team's most talented and versatile defensive lineman.

SPECIALISTS Replacing Lou Groza Award winner Zane Gonzalez, who set six FBS records, is a big challenge. Freshman Brandon Ruiz, who switched his pledge from Alabama to sign with the hometown Sun Devils, will get the chance. Australian Michael Sleep-Dalton will take over the punting duties.

FINAL ANALYSIS In the talent game, the Sun Devils are headed in the right direction but still are not near their destination. Graham has quadrupled the number of four- and five-star recruits on his roster over a five-year period, but much of the best talent is still young. If the Sun Devils can stabilize this season, with improvement in the secondary and at quarterback, they'll likely be over the hump transitioning to 2018, when most of their best players will return. However, Graham may need to reach a bowl game this year to make sure he's still around.



KALEN BALLAGE

"I can't get a read on that situation. They're changing things up again with the coordinators, so it's hard to know what they'll look like."
– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	1	**N'Keal Harry (So.)**	21	Terrell Chatman (So.)
WR	29	John Humphrey (So.)	10	Kyle Williams (So.)
WR	82	Jalen Harvey (Jr.)	17	Ryan Newsome (So.)
LT	99	Cohl Cabral (So.)	58	Tyson Rising (Jr.)
LG	76	**Sam Jones (Jr.)**	54	Connor Humphreys (Jr.)
C	65	**A.J. McCollum (Sr.)**	75	Tyler McClure (Sr.)
RG	71	Steve Miller (So.)	51	Zach Robertson (So.)
RT	59	**Quinn Bailey (Jr.)**	51	Zach Robertson (So.)
TE	9	Jay Jay Wilson (Jr.)	87	Tommy Hudson (So.)
QB		Blake Barnett (So.	5	**Manny Wilkins (Jr.)**
RB	4	**Demario Richard (Sr.)**	7	**Kalen Ballage (Sr.)**

DEFENSE (8)

DE	1	**JoJo Wicker (Jr.)**		Doug Subtyl (Jr.)
DT	90	**Tashon Smallwood (Sr.)**	95	Renell Wren (Jr.)
DT	45	George Lea (So.)	95	Renell Wren (Jr.)
BUCK	4	**Koron Crump (Sr.)**	44	**A.J. Latu (Sr.)**
LB	2	Christian Sam (Jr.)	39	Malik Lawal (So.)
LB	3	**D.J. Calhoun (Sr.)**	20	Khaylan Thomas (So.)
SPUR	17	J'Marcus Rhodes (Sr.)	23	Tyler Whiley (Jr.)
CB	25	**Kareem Orr (Jr.)**	16	Maurice Chandler (Sr.)
CB	7	Chase Lucas (Fr.)	16	Maurice Chandler (Sr.)
SS	31	**Marcus Ball (Sr.)**		Ty Thomas (Fr.)
FS	13	**Armand Perry (Jr.)**	21	Chad Adams (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Brandon Ruiz (Fr.)	KR	7 Kalen Ballage (Sr.)
P	36	Michael Sleep-Dalton (So.)	PR	17 Ryan Newsome (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Manny Wilkins, 311-197-2,329-9, 12 TDs
Rushing: Demario Richard, 155 att., 593 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: N'Keal Harry, 58 rec., 659 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: DJ Calhoun*, 77
Sacks: Koron Crump, 9.0
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Todd Graham
Record at School: 39-26 (5 years)
Career Record: 88-55 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Rob Likens, Billy Napier
Defensive Coordinator: Phil Bennett
Tempe, AZ • Sun Devil Stadium (56,232)

Craig Mitchelldyer

COLORADO BUFFALOES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **34** • PAC-12 SOUTH PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 4-5 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Colorado State #	
Sept. 9	Texas State	
Sept. 16	Northern Colorado	
Sept. 23	Washington	
Sept. 30	at UCLA	
Oct. 7	Arizona	
Oct. 14	at Oregon State	
Oct. 21	at Washington State	
Oct. 28	California	
Nov. 4	at Arizona State	
Nov. 11	USC	
Nov. 25	at Utah	#Denver, CO

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-4, 8-1 PAC-12

Sept. 2	vs. Colorado State #	W	44-7
Sept. 10	Idaho State	W	56-7
Sept. 17	at Michigan	L	28-45
Sept. 24	at Oregon	W	41-38
Oct. 1	Oregon State	W	47-6
Oct. 8	at USC	L	17-21
Oct. 15	Arizona State	W	40-16
Oct. 22	at Stanford	W	10-5
Nov. 3	UCLA	W	20-10
Nov. 12	at Arizona	W	49-24
Nov. 19	Washington State	W	38-24
Nov. 26	Utah	W	27-22
Dec. 2	vs. Washington %	L	10-41
Dec. 29	vs. Oklahoma State &	L	8-38

#Denver %Santa Clara &Alamo Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jake Moretti, OT, Arvada, CO
2. K.D. Nixon, WR, DeSoto, TX
3. Grant Polley, OL, Denton, TX
4. Jonathan Van Diest, DL, Louisville, CO
5. Laviska Shenault Jr., WR, DeSoto, TX
6. Terrance Lang, DE, Pasadena, CA
7. Nate Landman, LB, Danville, CA
8. Jared Poplawski, TE, Scottsdale, AZ
9. Jacob Callier, LB, Downey, CA
10. Chris Miller, CB, Denton, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.1 ppg	7	51
Rushing	182.6 ypg	8	56
Passing	254.5 ypg	8	47
Total	437.1 ypg	6	47
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	21.7 ppg	3	20
Rushing	148.9 ypg	6	44
Passing	193.6 ypg	2	20
Total	342.5 ypg	2	19
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.43	4	32

STAT CORNER

17

CU broke through with 10 wins in 2016 but still lost three games by at least 17 points – one fewer than in 2015 (4-9 overall).

OFFENSE Colorado will miss the leadership of quarterback Sefo Liufau, a four-year starter, the school's all-time leading passer and the heart and soul of last year's South Division champions. There are, however, nine offensive starters back, and confident sophomore Steven Montez is ready to take over at quarterback. Montez went 2–1 as a starter last year when Liufau went down with an ankle injury, and he finished the season with nine touchdown passes in only 140 attempts (Liufau had 11 in 319 passes). Montez has a gunslinger mentality and needs to improve on his decision making, but he makes big plays with his strong arm and legs.

Senior Phillip Lindsay is one of the most versatile running backs in the Pac-12. He had 1,745 yards from scrimmage, led the league with 16 rushing touchdowns and finished third on the team with 53 receptions.

At receiver, seniors Devin Ross, Shay Fields and Bryce Bobo combined for 169 catches for 2,218 yards and 16 touchdowns, while junior Jay MacIntyre — the son of head coach Mike MacIntyre — added 32 catches for 412 yards and a touchdown. Junior Juwann Winfree, a junior college transfer, was believed to be the best of the bunch last year before tearing his ACL in fall camp and missing the entire season.

Four of five starters return to the line, led by sixth-year senior left tackle Jeromy Irwin and sophomore Tim Lynott at right guard.

DEFENSE Former Kentucky coordinator D.J. Eliot takes over a Colorado defense that ranked in the top 20 nationally in scoring and total defense. Keeping the Buffs in the top 20 will be tough. In addition to losing Jim Leavitt, who coordinated a remarkable turnaround on defense, and two other assistants, the Buffs lost eight starters from last year's team. The Buffs will run the same 3-4 scheme, however, and Eliot has kept CU's terminology intact.

Despite the turnover, CU returns several players who have either started or had significant playing time in their careers.

Rick Gamboa has started 25 consecutive games at inside linebacker, while safety Afolabi Laguda and "Buff" back Ryan Moeller were also starters last year. Cornerback Isaiah Oliver is an exceptional athlete (he pulls double duty as a decathlete for the track team) and will become a full-time starter for the first time in his career. Outside linebacker Derek McCartney (25 career starts) is back after a season-ending ACL tear in Week 3 last year, and end Leo Jackson III leads the front. He was a starter in 2015 and the top backup on the line last year.

SPECIALISTS Kickers Chris Graham and Davis Price both struggled with field goals and extra points last year, so the Buffs signed 30-year-old freshman James Stefanou, a former professional soccer player from Australia. All three will compete in the fall. Punter Alex Kinney struggled a bit last year but is expected to handle the job for the third year in a row.

FINAL ANALYSIS Colorado had its best season in 15 years and snapped a nine-year bowl drought with an inconsistent offense and a top-notch defense. This year, the Buffs will lean more on an experienced offense. There is a lot of excitement about Montez's potential, and with the weapons around him, the expectation is for the offense to improve upon last year's 31.1 points per game, which ranked seventh in the Pac-12. Given the losses on defense, it's tough to expect the Buffs to be as good as they were a year ago, but if they can keep opponents under 28 points per game and the offense improves, this team has the ability to challenge for the South title and get back to a bowl game.



PHILLIP LINDSAY

"Offensively, they run some unique sets. They can use tempo in interesting ways, and they'll throw in some motions. They do some neat stuff."
– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	1	**Shay Fields (Sr.)**	9	Juwann Winfree (Jr.)
WR	4	**Bryce Bobo (Sr.)**	17	Kabion Ento (Sr.)
WR	2	**Devin Ross (Sr.)**		K.D. Nixon (Fr.)
WR	14	**Jay MacIntyre (Jr.)**	18	Lee Walker (Jr.)
LT	76	**Jeromy Irwin (Sr.)**	73	Isaac Miller (So.)
LG	68	**Gerrad Kough (Sr.)**	75	Josh Kaiser (Jr.)
C	79	Jonathan Huckins (Sr.)	55	Brett Tonz (So.)
RG	56	**Tim Lynott Jr. (So.)**	70	Jake Moretti (Fr.)
RT	64	**Aaron Haigler (So.)**	60	Dillon Middlemiss (So.)
QB	12	Steven Montez (So.)	15	Sam Noyer (Fr.)
RB	23	**Phillip Lindsay (Sr.)**	35	Beau Bisharat (So.)

DEFENSE (3)

DE	59	Timothy Coleman (Sr.)	50	Frank Umu (So.)
NT	9	Javier Edwards (Jr.)	56	Jase Franke (Jr.)
DE	52	Leo Jackson III (Sr.)	15	Chris Mulumba (Jr.)
OLB	95	Derek McCartney (Sr.)	42	N.J. Falo (Jr.)
ILB	32	**Rick Gamboa (Jr.)**	36	Akil Jones (Fr.)
ILB	20	Drew Lewis (Jr.)		Nate Landman (Fr.)
BUFF	25	**Ryan Moeller (Sr.)**	6	Evan White (Jr.)
CB	26	Isaiah Oliver (Jr.)	8	Anthony Julmisse (So.)
CB	5	Trey Udoffia (Fr.)	4	Dante Wigley (So.)
SS	1	**Afolabi Laguda (Sr.)**	22	Kyle Trego (Jr.)
FS	7	Nick Fisher (Jr.)	6	Evan White (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		James Stefanou (Fr.)	KR	8	Anthony Julmisse (So.)
P	89	Alex Kinney (Jr.)	PR	26	Isaiah Oliver (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Steven Montez, 140-83-1,078-5, 9 TDs
Rushing: Phillip Lindsay, 244 att., 1,252 yds., 16 TDs
Receiving: Devin Ross, 69 rec., 787 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Rick Gamboa, 77
Sacks: Timonty Coleman, 1.5; N.J Falo 1.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike MacIntyre
Record at School: 20-31 (4 years)
Career Record: 35-52 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Darrin Chiaverini, Brian Lindgren • **Defensive Coordinator:** D.J. Eliot
Boulder, CO • Folsom Field (50,183)

Peter Brouillet

UCLA BRUINS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **33** • PAC-12 SOUTH PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 5-4 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	Texas A&M	
Sept. 9	Hawaii	
Sept. 16	at Memphis	
Sept. 23	at Stanford	
Sept. 30	Colorado	
Oct. 14	at Arizona	
Oct. 21	Oregon	
Oct. 28	at Washington	
Nov. 3	at Utah	
Nov. 11	Arizona State	
Nov. 18	at USC	
Nov. 24	California	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 2-7 PAC-12

Sept. 3	at Texas A&M	(ot)	L	24-31
Sept. 10	UNLV		W	42-21
Sept. 17	at BYU		W	17-14
Sept. 24	Stanford		L	13-22
Oct. 1	Arizona		W	45-24
Oct. 8	at Arizona State		L	20-23
Oct. 15	at Washington State		L	21-27
Oct. 22	Utah		L	45-52
Nov. 3	at Colorado		L	10-20
Nov. 12	Oregon State		W	38-24
Nov. 19	USC		L	14-36
Nov. 26	at California		L	10-36

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jaelan Phillips, DL, Redlands, CA
2. Darnay Holmes, DB, Pasadena, CA
3. Greg Rogers, DL, Las Vegas, NV
4. Stephan Zabie, OL, Austin, TX
5. Elijah Gates, DB, Pasadena, CA
6. Jimmy Jaggers, TE, Roseville, CA
7. Rahyme Johnson, LB, Los Angeles, CA
8. Martin Andrus, DL, Long Beach, CA
9. Kanan Ray, OL, Chatsworth, CA
10. Odua Isibor, DL, Phoenix, AZ

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.9 ppg	11	96
Rushing	84.3 ypg	12	127
Passing	295.6 ypg	3	19
Total	379.8 ypg	10	91
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.5 ppg	7	59
Rushing	171.5 ypg	8	63
Passing	210.5 ypg	3	43
Total	382.0 ypg	5	47
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
-2	-0.17	9	82

STAT CORNER

2.7

UCLA averaged just 2.7 rushes per game of 10-plus yards, second-lowest in FBS. A lack of run success was devastating in 2016.

OFFENSE Los Angeles is a city rife with total makeovers, and after last year's 4–8 record, it was not surprising to see Jim Mora opt for a complete overhaul on offense for the Bruins. Four new coaches were brought in as part of a staff revamp, highlighted by new offensive coordinator Jedd Fisch. Expect an emphasis on establishing the run early in games, and the fact that the entire running back corps returns, including the trio of Soso Jamabo, Bolu Olorunfunmi and Nate Starks, should help tremendously.

All eyes this fall will be focused on other areas, however, and that chiefly means quarterback, where junior Josh Rosen is hoping to get his promising career back on track after a shoulder injury in 2016. The signal caller was at 100 percent for spring practice, and it's safe to say that the former five-star is hoping to make up for lost time even if the receiving corps he'll be throwing to is lacking veteran standouts.

Any optimism UCLA fans feel about Rosen's return will be tempered by offensive line concerns, which have been the team's Achilles heel. All-Pac-12 center Scott Quessenberry anchors the group, which loses only one starter but needs vast improvement across the board after struggling to run the football (2.93 yards per carry last season) and keep the QB upright.

DEFENSE While it took a while for defensive coordinator Tom Bradley to settle into life on the West Coast, he managed to turn his group into one of the few positives the Bruins had last year. This season will be a different beast, as replacing NFL talent at all three levels like Takkarist McKinley, Jayon Brown and Fabian Moreau won't be easy. Luckily, though, the team has recruited well enough that the defensive staff won't be lacking for options when it comes to playmakers.

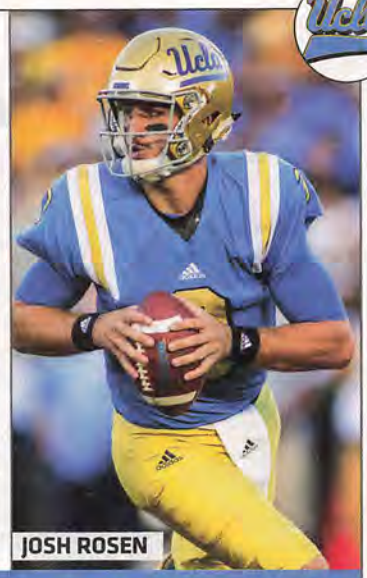
Leading the way is linebacker Kenny Young, who developed into a quality starter and should be able to improve significantly upon the 5.0 sacks and 8.5 tackles for a loss as a junior. Jacob Tuioti-Mariner has the flexibility to play at just about every spot along the defensive line and could follow his former teammates to the NFL with more seasoning. How stingy this group is defensively may come down to how well a pair of five-stars rush the passer though — 2015 signee Keisean Lucier-South and 2017 early enrollee Jaelan Phillips.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker JJ Molson was just 12-of-20 on field goals as a freshman, but the coaching staff hopes that a full offseason of work will be enough to turn things around. Austin Kent (38.3 yards per punt) figures to take over full-time punting duties, while return duties are set to be taken over by Jordan Lasley after several misadventures in that area a season ago.

FINAL ANALYSIS Those who swear allegiance to the powder blues have been trying to figure out if the Bruins' disastrous 2016 season was a blip in the radar or part of a troubling trend under Mora. Injuries to key players like Rosen were a big factor in the team's recent backslide, but two straight campaigns of declining win totals have many thinking that 2017 will be a referendum on the head coach's tenure.

Despite concerns, the return of Rosen to the starting lineup is enough to get people to buy low on a team that should make big gains offensively. That should take some pressure off a re-tooled defense that is stuffed with talented players, and it's hard to go anywhere but up on special teams.

It might be tough to have a breakthrough season given how competitive Pac-12 South has become, but this has the potential to be a top-25 team if the pieces fall into place.



JOSH ROSEN

"They're always scary because, hey, they're UCLA and they have players. When they play well, they look like they can beat anyone in the country."
– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	7	**Darren Andrews (Sr.)**	10	Demetric Felton (Fr.)	
WR	2	Jordan Lasley (Jr.)	14	Theo Howard (So.)	
WR	82	**Eldridge Massington (Sr.)**	21	Mossi Johnson (Sr.)	
LT	77	Kolton Miller (Jr.)	**75**	**Andre James (So.)**	
LG	**76**	**Kenny Lacy (Sr.)**	71	Poasi Moala (Sr.)	
C	**52**	**Scott Quessenberry (Sr.)**		Kanan Ray (Fr.)	
RG	**69**	**Najee Toran (Sr.)**	65	Paco Perez (Fr.)	
RT	59	Zach Bateman (Sr.)		Stephan Zabie (Fr.)	
TE	81	Caleb Wilson (So.)	88	Austin Roberts (Jr.)	
QB	**3**	**Josh Rosen (Jr.)**	18	Devon Modster (Fr.)	
RB	1	Soso Jamabo (Jr.)	23	Nate Starks (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	90	Rick Wade (So.)	92	Osa Odighizuwa (Fr.)
DT	**91**	**Jacob Tuioti-Mariner (Sr.)**		Greg Rogers (Fr.)
DT	75	Boss Tagaloa (So.)	**99**	**Matt Dickerson (Sr.)**
DE	15	Jaelan Phillips (Fr.)	11	Keisean Lucier-South (So.)
OLB	2	Josh Woods (Jr.)	17	DeChaun Holiday (So.)
MLB	**42**	**Kenny Young (Sr.)**	52	Lokeni Toailoa (So.)
OLB	14	Krys Barnes (So.)	32	Mique Juarez (Fr.)
CB	1	Darnay Holmes (Fr.)	10	Colin Samuel (So.)
CB	**22**	**Nate Meadors (Jr.)**		Elijah Gates (Fr.)
SS	6	Adarius Pickett (Jr.)	3	Brandon Burton (So.)
FS	**4**	**Jaleel Wadood (Sr.)**	23	Will Lockett (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	17	JJ Molson (So.)	KR	2	Jordan Lasley (Jr.)
P	92	Austin Kent (So.)	PR	6	Adarius Pickett (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Josh Rosen, 231-137-1,915-5, 10 TDs
Rushing: Soso Jamabo, 82 att., 321 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Darren Andrews, 55 rec., 709 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Kenny Young, 90
Sacks: Kenny Young, 5.0
Interceptions: Adarius Pickett, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jim Mora
Record at School: 41-24 (5 years)
Career Record: 41-24 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jedd Fisch
Defensive Coordinator: Tom Bradley
Los Angeles, CA • Rose Bowl (91,136)

Peter Brouillet

USC TROJANS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **5** • PAC-12 SOUTH PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **11-2, 8-1 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Western Michigan	
Sept. 9	Stanford	
Sept. 16	Texas	
Sept. 23	at California	
Sept. 29	at Washington State	
Oct. 7	Oregon State	
Oct. 14	Utah	
Oct. 21	at Notre Dame	
Oct. 28	at Arizona State	
Nov. 4	Arizona	
Nov. 11	at Colorado	
Nov. 18	UCLA	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 7-2 PAC-12

Sept. 3	vs. Alabama #	L	6-52
Sept. 10	Utah State	W	45-7
Sept. 17	at Stanford	L	10-27
Sept. 23	at Utah	L	27-31
Oct. 1	Arizona State	W	41-20
Oct. 8	Colorado	W	21-17
Oct. 15	at Arizona	W	48-14
Oct. 27	California	W	45-24
Nov. 5	Oregon	W	45-20
Nov. 12	at Washington	W	26-13
Nov. 19	at UCLA	W	36-14
Nov. 26	Notre Dame	W	45-27
Jan. 2	vs. Penn State %	W	52-49

#Arlington %Rose Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Stephen Carr, RB, Gardena, CA
2. Joseph Lewis IV, WR, Los Angeles, CA
3. Austin Jackson, OL, Phoenix, AZ
4. Jay Tufele, DL, Salt Lake City, UT
5. Marlon Tuipulotu, DL, Independence, OR
6. Bubba Bolden, DB, Las Vegas, NV
7. Levi Jones, LB, Austin, TX
8. Greg Johnson, ATH, Los Angeles, CA
9. Jack Sears, QB, San Clemente, CA
10. Alijah Vera-Tucker, OL, Oakland, CA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.4 ppg	5	36
Rushing	200.7 ypg	5	42
Passing	276.4 ypg	4	25
Total	477.1 ypg	4	20
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.2 ppg	5	38
Rushing	139.6 ypg	4	31
Passing	227.5 ypg	6	65
Total	367.2 ypg	3	36
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
0	0.00	8	67

STAT CORNER

38.6

USC averaged 4.6 yards per play and 20.3 points per game before Sam Darnold took over at QB. After: 6.9 and 38.6, respectively.

OFFENSE After Sam Darnold took over as the starting quarterback in late September, the Trojans went 9–1, capped by a dramatic comeback to defeat Penn State in the Rose Bowl, as the dynamic passer breathed new life into a stagnant offense. In the 10 games he started, USC averaged 6.9 yards per play. Only seven FBS teams averaged a better clip over the full season. Darnold will again need to lift USC, especially after key departures on the offensive line, including starting tackles Zach Banner and Chad Wheeler, and at receiver, where JuJu Smith-Schuster and Darreus Rogers have moved on.

The big question is whether Darnold can stay upright. He was the least-sacked quarterback in the Pac-12 last season. Part of that stemmed from his own ability to evade the rush and deliver accurate throws under pressure, but the veteran bodies up front helped, too.

It also remains to be seen if younger wideouts, including Deontay Burnett, Michael Pittman and Velus Jones, can replace Smith-Schuster and Rogers, who combined for 41 percent of the receptions and 45 percent of the receiving yards last season.

Ronald Jones II, who has amassed 2,069 yards in two seasons, headlines a potent rushing attack.

DEFENSE The Trojans will begin their second consecutive season under coordinator Clancy Pendergast, who will oversee a more experienced bunch with six returning starters from a group that was third in the Pac-12 in total defense. The biggest concern will be up front, with the loss of Stevie Tu'ikolovatu, a burly nose tackle who frequently commanded double teams in his one season after arriving as a graduate transfer from Utah. Kenny Bigelow and Marlon Tuipulotu could assume his place, but Bigelow is coming off a second ACL surgery, and Tuipulotu, who ran with the first-team defense in spring practice, is a true freshman. Expect them to rotate.

The linebacker unit is the most proven group, led by Cameron Smith, who amassed a team-high 83 tackles as a sophomore. Porter Gustin and Uchenna Nwosu remain disruptive as well. Gustin and Nwosu at times line up as edge rushers in Pendergast's 5-2 look. They combined for 20.5 tackles for a loss a year ago. Cornerback Adoree' Jackson, who won the Jim Thorpe Award as the nation's top defensive back, left early for the NFL. Jackson had five of the defense's 14 interceptions last season, but most of the secondary remains intact.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Matt Boermeester made the game-winning field goal in the Rose Bowl, but he is unlikely to return for his senior season after he was suspended from the team in February for an unspecified "student conduct issue." That would leave redshirt freshman Michael Brown to take over. Jackson, the dynamic cornerback who also returned two kickoffs and two punts for touchdowns, will also be missed on special teams.

FINAL ANALYSIS The resurgence of USC, coming off its best season since the Pete Carroll era, is expected to continue, with the program inching toward its first conference championship in nearly a decade and first-ever appearance in the College Football Playoff. Darnold, considered among the early favorites for the Heisman Trophy, adds credence to the hype. But the Trojans remain young. More than 50 of their 85 scholarship players will be underclassmen. Coach Clay Helton has recruited well thus far, with two straight top-10 classes, so the Trojans are talented and have been free of NCAA sanctions since 2014. If USC is to become the third Pac-12 team in four seasons to make the CFB Playoff, it can thank a regular-season schedule that is more navigable, without Alabama and Washington. It's likely the Trojans will be a factor in the race.



SAM DARNOLD

Peter Brouillet

"They're the team to beat in the division. They're loaded athletically, and they have one of the best quarterbacks in college football."

– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	6	Michael Pittman Jr. (So.)	17	Josh Imatorbhebhe (Fr.)	
WR	10	Jalen Greene (Jr.)	21	Tyler Vaughns (Fr.)	
WR	80	Deontay Burnett (Jr.)	23	Velus Jones Jr. (Fr.)	
LT	70	Chuma Edoga (Jr.)	76	Clayton Johnston (So.)	
LG	50	Toa Lobendahn (Jr.)	63	Roy Hemsley (So.)	
C	74	**Nico Falah (Sr.)**	66	Cole Smith (So.)	
RG	60	**Viane Talamaivao (Sr.)**	65	Frank Martin II (Fr.)	
RT	77	Chris Brown (Jr.)	72	Andrew Vorhees (Fr.)	
TE	88	Daniel Imatorbhebhe (So.)	82	Tyler Petite (Jr.)	
QB	14	**Sam Darnold (So.)**	19	Matt Fink (Fr.)	
RB	25	**Ronald Jones II (Jr.)**	28	Aca'Cedric Ware (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	94	**Rasheem Green (Jr.)**	89	Christian Rector (So.)	
NT	95	Kenny Bigelow Jr. (Sr.)	51	Marlon Tuipulotu (Fr.)	
DT	44	Malik Dorton (Jr.)	98	Josh Fatu (Sr.)	
OLB	45	**Porter Gustin (Jr.)**	90	Connor Murphy (So.)	
ILB	35	**Cameron Smith (Jr.)**		Levi Jones (Fr.)	
ILB	10	John Houston Jr. (So.)	56	Jordan Iosefa (So.)	
OLB	42	**Uchenna Nwosu (Sr.)**	99	Oluwole Betiku Jr. (So.)	
CB	8	**Iman Marshall (Jr.)**	24	Isaiah Langley (Jr.)	
CB	1	Jack Jones (So.)	27	Ajene Harris (Jr.)	
S	7	**Marvell Tell III (Jr.)**	14	Ykili Ross (So.)	
S	4	Chris Hawkins (Sr.)	21	Jamel Cook (Fr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	49	Michael Brown (Fr.)	KR	27	Ajene Harris (Jr.)
P	36	Chris Tilbey (Jr.)	PR	80	Deontay Burnett (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Sam Darnold, 366-246-3,086-9, 31 TDs
Rushing: Ronald Jones II, 177 att., 1,082 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Deontay Burnett, 56 rec., 622 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Cameron Smith, 83
Sacks: Rasheem Green, 6.0
Interceptions: Iman Marshall, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Clay Helton
Record at School: 16-7 (2+ years)
Career Record: 16-7 (2+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tee Martin
Defensive Coordinator: Clancy Pendergast
Los Angeles, CA • Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum (93,607)

UTAH UTES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **38** • PAC-12 SOUTH PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 4-5 PAC-12**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	North Dakota	
Sept. 9	at BYU	
Sept. 16	San Jose State	
Sept. 22	at Arizona	
Oct. 7	Stanford	
Oct. 14	at USC	
Oct. 21	Arizona State	
Oct. 28	at Oregon	
Nov. 3	UCLA	
Nov. 11	Washington State	
Nov. 18	at Washington	
Nov. 25	Colorado	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 5-4 PAC-12

Sept. 1	Southern Utah	W	24-0
Sept. 10	BYU	W	20-19
Sept. 17	at San Jose State	W	34-17
Sept. 23	USC	W	31-27
Oct. 1	at California	L	23-28
Oct. 8	Arizona	W	36-23
Oct. 15	at Oregon State	W	19-14
Oct. 22	at UCLA	W	52-45
Oct. 29	Washington	L	24-31
Nov. 10	at Arizona State	W	49-26
Nov. 19	Oregon	L	28-30
Nov. 26	at Colorado	L	22-27
Dec. 28	vs. Indiana #	W	26-24

#Foster Farms Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jaylon Johnson, DB, Fresno, CA
2. Corrion Ballard, DB, Humble, TX*
3. Marquise Blair, LB, Wooster, OH*
4. Tyquez Hampton, WR, El Paso, TX
5. Bryan Thompson, WR, Moreno Valley, CA
6. Tareke Lewis, DB, Palatka, FL*
7. Jason Shelley, QB, Little Elm, TX
8. Jordan Agasiva, OL, Kalihi, HI*
9. Michael Richardson, OL, American Fork, UT
10. Aliki Vimahi, DL, Kahuku, HI

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	PAC-12	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.8 ppg	8	60
Rushing	214.0 ypg	3	32
Passing	216.7 ypg	9	78
Total	430.7 ypg	7	51
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	23.9 ppg	4	33
Rushing	128.7 ypg	1	22
Passing	254.3 ypg	8	101
Total	383.0 ypg	6	48
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**PAC-12**	**NATIONAL**
+6	+0.46	2	28

STAT CORNER

-5.1/+6

Based on fumble recovery and interception rates, Utah's expected turnover margin was minus-5.1. Actual margin: plus-6.

OFFENSE Utah coach Kyle Whittingham blames an inadequate offense for making the Utes the only Pac-12 South program that has not won a division title since the conference's expansion six years ago. That's why he hired Troy Taylor as his eighth play caller in nine seasons.

Taylor's charge is to energize an offense led by quarterback Troy Williams, who started all 13 games in 2016 as a junior college transfer, passing for 2,757 yards and 15 touchdowns. He led the Utes to a victory over USC by directing three consecutive touchdown drives in the second half. Williams played inconsistently in losses to Washington, Oregon and Colorado late in the season, but he expects to be sharper as a senior in what he says is a "quarterback-friendly" system.

The story of Utah's 2016 season at running back may never be duplicated. Joe Williams retired from football after two games only to return a month later and produce a 1,407-yard season. Williams' comeback became necessary because of injuries to his top replacements. Those players, Armand Shyne and Zack Moss, will be the Utes' primary rushers. Devonta'e Henry-Cole, who carried the ball only once as a freshman, was a star of the spring.

Raelon Singleton, Siaosi Wilson and Demari Simpkins are among the receivers who hope to thrive in a more dynamic offense. The Utes are replacing four starters, notably left tackle Garett Bolles, from one of the Pac-12's best offensive lines. Bolles' departure to the NFL after one season as a junior college transfer is a big loss, but the Utes have the makings of another solid group.

DEFENSE The Utes restock the defensive line year after year with productive players. Utah ranked No. 1 in the Pac-12 in rushing defense last season and tied for eighth in the country with 43 sacks. Lowell Lotulelei is a mainstay in the tradition of his brother Star, an NFL veteran.

After being considered the defense's weakest area in 2016, the linebacking is "one of our stronger positions," defensive coordinator Morgan Scalley says. "They're the same guys, they're just older now."

Sunia Tauteoli and Kavika Luafatasaga should be more productive in a scheme that primarily uses only two linebackers, with five defensive backs being needed against the passing offenses of the Pac-12.

The Utes are in the midst of a "complete rebuild" in the secondary, Whittingham says. The exception is strong safety Chase Hansen, a converted quarterback who has become a defensive star. Hansen had four fumble recoveries, three interceptions and 7.5 tackles for a loss in 2016.

SPECIALISTS The Utes have made punting and placekicking fun to watch in recent years, although Whittingham would rather have drives finish with extra points than punts and field goals. Mitch Wishnowsky won the program's third consecutive Ray Guy Award as the nation's top punter, averaging 47.7 yards. He rarely sacrificed hang time for distance, although Utah allowed a punt return for Washington's winning score. Utah must replace kicker Andy Phillips, who concluded his record-setting career with the winning field goal in the bowl game.

FINAL ANALYSIS Utah has established itself as one of the Pac-12's most consistent programs, but there's more to do. Whittingham is driven to make his team the South's sixth winner in seven seasons.

"We're not going to apologize for winning nine-plus games the last three years, but we want to win a championship," Whittingham says. "We've got to find a way to break through."

The Utes' Oct. 14 visit to USC will be pivotal. Utah has beaten the Trojans two of the past three seasons.



CHASE HANSEN

"They try to take away what you do best, and they're very, very mentally tough. I think Coach (Kyle) Whittingham does an unbelievable job."
– An opposing Pac-12 assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	11	**Raelon Singleton (Jr.)**	6	Kyle Fulks (Sr.)
WR	17	Demari Simpkins (So.)	4	Troy McCormick (Sr.)
WR	80	Siaosi Wilson (So.)	24	Kenric Young (Sr.)
LT	70	Jackson Barton (Jr.)	73	Johnny Capra (So.)
LG	77	Darrin Paulo (So.)	66	Kyle Lanterman (So.)
C	69	Lo Falemaka (Sr.)	65	Paul Toala (So.)
RG		Jordan Agasiva (Jr.)	50	Orlando Umana (Fr.)
RT	74	**Salesi Uhatafe (Sr.)**	76	Scott Peck (Fr.)
TE	87	Siale Fakailoatonga (Sr.)	88	Harrison Handley (Sr.)
QB	3	**Troy Williams (Sr.)**	1	Tyler Huntley (So.)
RB	23	Armand Shyne (Jr.)	2	Zack Moss (So.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	56	Bradlee Anae (So.)	47	Caleb Repp (So.)
DT	45	**Filipo Mokofisi (Sr.)**	99	Leki Fotu (So.)
DT	93	**Lowell Lotulelei (Sr.)**	53	Alani Havili-Katoa (Jr.)
DE	11	Kylie Fitts (Sr.)	92	Maxs Tupai (Fr.)
MLB	10	**Sunia Tauteoli (Sr.)**	3	Donavan Thompson (So.)
OLB	5	**Kavika Luafatasaga (Sr.)**	30	Cody Barton (Jr.)
FS	15	Corrion Ballard (Jr.)	2	Philip Afia (So.)
SS	22	Chase Hansen (Jr.)	13	Jordan Fogal (Sr.)
CB	23	Julian Blackmon (So.)		Tareke Lewis (Jr.)
CB	25	Casey Hughes (Jr.)	21	Tyrone Smith (Jr.)
NB	1	Boobie Hobbs (Sr.)	26	Terrell Burgess (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Hayes Hicken (So.)	KR	1	Boobie Hobbs (Sr.)
P	33	Mitch Wishnowsky (Jr.)	PR	6	Kyle Fulks (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Troy Williams, 390-207-2,757-8, 15 TDs
Rushing: Zack Moss, 84 att., 382 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Raelon Singleton, 27 rec., 464 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Chase Hansen, 90
Sacks: Filipo Mokofisi, 5.0
Interceptions: Chase Hansen, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Kyle Whittingham
Record at School: 104-50 (12 years)
Career Record: 104-50 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Troy Taylor
Defensive Coordinator: Morgan Scalley
Salt Lake City, UT • Rice-Eccles Stadium (45,807)

University of Utah Athletic Communications

SEC PREVIEW



JALEN HURTS

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

	EAST	WEST
1	GEORGIA BULLDOGS 9-4, 6-2	ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE 12-1, 7-1
2	FLORIDA GATORS 8-4, 6-2	AUBURN TIGERS 9-3, 6-2
3	TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS 8-4, 4-4	LSU TIGERS 9-3, 5-3
4	SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS 6-6, 4-4	ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS 7-5, 3-5
5	KENTUCKY WILDCATS 7-5, 4-4	MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS 7-5, 3-5
6	VANDERBILT COMMODORES 6-6, 3-5	TEXAS A&M AGGIES 7-5, 3-5
7	MISSOURI TIGERS 5-7, 1-7	OLE MISS REBELS 5-7, 1-7

SEC Championship: Alabama over Georgia

2016 BOWL RESULTS

National Championship Game: Clemson 35, Alabama 31
Peach Bowl: Alabama 24, Washington 7
Sugar Bowl: Oklahoma 35, Auburn 19
Citrus Bowl: LSU 29, Louisville 9
Outback Bowl: Florida 30, Iowa 3
TaxSlayer Bowl: Georgia Tech 33, Kentucky 18
Music City Bowl: Tennessee 38, Nebraska 24
Belk Bowl: Virginia Tech 35, Arkansas 24
Liberty Bowl: Georgia 31, TCU 23
Texas Bowl: Kansas State 33, Texas A&M 28
Birmingham Bowl: USF 46, South Carolina 39 (OT)
Independence Bowl: NC State 41, Vanderbilt 17
St. Petersburg Bowl: Mississippi State 17, Miami (Ohio) 16

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Sugar Bowl (CFP): Alabama vs. Washington
Fiesta Bowl: LSU vs. USC
Chick-fil-A Bowl: Auburn vs. USF
Citrus Bowl: Georgia vs. Miami (Fla.)
Belk Bowl: Florida vs. Louisville
Outback Bowl: Tennessee vs. Wisconsin
Texas Bowl: Arkansas vs. Baylor
TaxSlayer Bowl: Mississippi State vs. Virginia Tech
Independence Bowl: Texas A&M vs. Pittsburgh
Liberty Bowl: South Carolina vs. West Virginia
Music City Bowl: Kentucky vs. Indiana
Birmingham Bowl: Vanderbilt vs. Tulsa

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2016 SEC STANDINGS

EAST	SEC	OVERALL	WEST	SEC	OVERALL
FLORIDA	6-2	9-4	ALABAMA	8-0	14-1
TENNESSEE	4-4	9-4	LSU	5-3	8-4
GEORGIA	4-4	8-5	AUBURN	5-3	8-5
KENTUCKY	4-4	7-6	TEXAS A&M	4-4	8-5
SOUTH CAROLINA	3-5	6-7	ARKANSAS	3-5	7-6
VANDERBILT	3-5	6-7	MISSISSIPPI STATE	3-5	6-7
MISSOURI	2-6	4-8	OLE MISS	2-6	5-7

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. Alabama
2. Georgia
3. LSU
4. Auburn
5. Florida
6. Texas A&M
7. Tennessee
8. South Carolina
9. Mississippi State
10. Arkansas
11. Kentucky
12. Ole Miss
13. Missouri
14. Vanderbilt

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
ALABAMA	1	1	3	1	1	2	1
ARKANSAS	3	4	11	6	12	12	10
AUBURN	2	3	6	2	5	3	5
FLORIDA	13	10	1	8	4	6	3
GEORGIA	5	2	8	11	2	1	2
KENTUCKY	12	9	14	4	14	5	6
LSU	11	5	12	3	3	4	4
MISSOURI	8	8	5	5	9	13	14
MISSISSIPPI STATE	4	13	9	12	13	7	13
OLE MISS	6	14	4	10	7	14	12
SOUTH CAROLINA	7	11	2	14	8	8	7
TENNESSEE	10	12	13	9	10	10	9
TEXAS A&M	14	7	7	7	6	9	11
VANDERBILT	9	6	10	13	11	11	8



KAMRYN PETTWAY

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Jalen Hurts	6-2	214	So.	Alabama
RB	Derrius Guice	5-11	212	Jr.	LSU
RB	Kamryn Pettway	6-0	237	Jr.	Auburn
AP	Deebo Samuel	6-0	208	Jr.	South Carolina
WR	Christian Kirk	5-11	200	Jr.	Texas A&M
WR	Calvin Ridley	6-1	190	Jr.	Alabama
TE	Hayden Hurst	6-5	253	Jr.	South Carolina
C	Frank Ragnow	6-5	319	Sr.	Arkansas
OL	Will Clapp	6-5	309	Jr.	LSU
OL	Ross Pierschbacher	6-4	304	Jr.	Alabama
OL	Braden Smith	6-6	305	Sr.	Auburn
OL	Jonah Williams	6-5	301	So.	Alabama

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Marquis Haynes	6-3	225	Sr.	Ole Miss
DL	Arden Key	6-6	238	Jr.	LSU
DL	Da'Ron Payne	6-2	208	Jr.	Alabama
DL	Trent Thompson	6-4	295	Jr.	Georgia
LB	Shaun Dion Hamilton	6-0	233	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Jordan Jones	6-2	220	So.	Kentucky
LB	Roquan Smith	6-1	225	Jr.	Georgia
CB	Duke Dawson	5-10	208	Sr.	Florida
CB	Minkah Fitzpatrick	6-1	201	Jr.	Alabama
S	Mike Edwards	6-0	200	So.	Kentucky
S	Ronnie Harrison	6-3	214	Jr.	Alabama

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Daniel Carlson	6-4	218	Sr.	Auburn
P	J.K. Scott	6-6	204	Sr.	Alabama
KR	Evan Berry	5-11	207	Sr.	Tennessee
PR	Christian Kirk	5-11	200	Jr.	Texas A&M

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Jarrett Stidham	6-2	210	Sr.	Auburn
RB	Nick Chubb	5-10	228	Sr.	Georgia
RB	Rawleigh Williams	5-10	226	Jr.	Arkansas
AP	Sony Michel	5-11	222	Sr.	Georgia
WR	Antonio Callaway	5-11	197	Jr.	Florida
WR	J'Mon Moore	6-3	205	Sr.	Missouri
TE	Isaac Nauta	6-4	246	So.	Georgia
C	Bradley Bozeman	6-5	314	Sr.	Alabama
OL	Paul Adams	6-6	315	Jr.	Missouri
OL	Nick Haynes	6-3	316	Jr.	Kentucky
OL	Martez Ivey	6-5	305	Jr.	Florida
OL	Isaiah Wynn	6-2	302	Sr.	Georgia

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Marlon Davidson	6-3	284	So.	Auburn
DL	CeCe Jefferson	6-1	261	Jr.	Florida
DL	Jeffrey Simmons	6-4	307	So.	Mississippi State
DL	Jabari Zuniga	6-3	245	So.	Florida
LB	Rashaan Evans	6-3	234	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Skai Moore	6-2	221	Sr.	South Carolina
LB	Denzil Ware	6-2	255	So.	Kentucky
CB	Anthony Averett	6-0	185	Sr.	Alabama
CB	Donte Jackson	5-11	173	Jr.	LSU
S	Dominick Sanders	6-0	193	Sr.	Georgia
S	Armani Watts	5-11	205	Sr.	Texas A&M

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Eddy Pineiro	6-0	173	So.	Florida
P	Johnny Townsend	6-1	211	Jr.	Florida
KR	Deebo Samuel	6-0	208	Jr.	South Carolina
PR	Antonio Callaway	5-11	197	Jr.	Florida

FLORIDA GATORS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **16** • SEC EAST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 6-2 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	vs. Michigan #
Sept.	9	Northern Colorado
Sept.	16	Tennessee
Sept.	23	at Kentucky
Sept.	30	Vanderbilt
Oct.	7	LSU
Oct.	14	Texas A&M
Oct.	28	vs. Georgia %
Nov.	4	at Missouri
Nov.	11	at South Carolina
Nov.	18	UAB
Nov.	25	Florida State

#Arlington, TX %Jacksonville, FL

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 6-2 SEC

Sept.	3	Massachusetts	W	24-7
Sept.	10	Kentucky	W	45-7
Sept.	17	North Texas	W	32-0
Sept.	24	at Tennessee	L	28-38
Oct.	1	at Vanderbilt	W	13-6
Oct.	15	Missouri	W	40-14
Oct.	29	vs. Georgia #	W	24-10
Nov.	5	at Arkansas	L	10-31
Nov.	12	South Carolina	W	20-7
Nov.	19	at LSU	W	16-10
Nov.	26	at Florida State	L	13-31
Dec.	3	vs. Alabama %	L	16-54
Jan.	2	vs. Iowa &	W	30-3

#Jacksonville %Atlanta &Outback Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tedarrell Slaton, OL, Fort Lauderdale, FL
2. James Robinson, WR, Lakeland, FL
3. Zachary Carter, DE, Tampa, FL
4. C.J. Henderson, CB, Miami, FL
5. Brad Stewart, DB, New Orleans, LA
6. Marco Wilson, CB, Fort Lauderdale, FL
7. Kadeem Telfort, OL, Miami, FL
8. Daquon Green, WR, Tampa, FL
9. Elijah Conliffe, DE, Hampton, VA
10. Kemore Gamble, TE, Miami, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.9 ppg	12	107
Rushing	128.2 ypg	14	113
Passing	215.8 ypg	6	79
Total	344.0 ypg	14	116
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	16.8 ppg	3	6
Rushing	144.5 ypg	5	38
Passing	148.5 ypg	1	2
Total	293.0 ypg	2	5
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+2	+0.15	8	49

STAT CORNER

11.8

Florida averaged just 11.8 gains per game of 10-plus yards (117th in FBS) and 3.5 such rushes (121st). The result: No easy points.

OFFENSE Florida hired Jim McElwain to revive a languishing offense. Two seasons later, the problems continue on the side of the ball where the Gators dominated during the days of Steve Spurrier and, later, Tim Tebow. Florida rode a stout defense to consecutive SEC East titles but will need to score more points to beat the top teams. Among SEC teams, only South Carolina, now under Muschamp, scored fewer touchdowns than the Gators' 35.

To turn things around, McElwain must develop a young quarterback and get dramatically improved play from an offensive line with four returning starters. Redshirt freshman quarterback Feleipe Franks ended spring practices the frontrunner. Meanwhile, junior Martez Ivey moved from guard to left tackle. The nation's No. 1 offensive line recruit in 2015 has All-SEC potential.

The past two seasons, receiver/returner Antonio Callaway has averaged 14.5 yards every time the touched the ball. Defenses will key on him. Sophomore deep threat Tyrie Cleveland and junior slot receiver Dre Massey need to capitalize.

Tailback Jordan Scarlett emerged from a crowded backfield last season to become the Gators' No. 1 option. Coming off an 889-yard season, the 5'10", 213-pound junior has a good chance to become just Florida's fourth 1,000-yard rusher in 20 years.

DEFENSE Florida assistant Randy Shannon played on and coached national championship defenses at Miami. He was an easy choice to replace defensive coordinator Geoff Collins, who left to become Temple's head coach.

Now, the hard part. Shannon, 51, looks to replace eight starters and uphold a standard on defense few can match. Florida ranked among the nation's top-15 defenses the past nine seasons. To field another top unit, several veterans need to thrive in expanded roles, and several young defenders must mature quickly.

Junior end Cece Jefferson has the tools to become a top pass rusher, while redshirt sophomore end Jabari Zuniga (8.5 TFLs in 2016) has breakout potential. The middle of the line is unsettled. Big things are expected from junior tackle Taven Bryan.

At linebacker, the Gators will turn to a trio of sophomores who were thrown into the fire. David Reese has a nose for the ball; Kylan Johnson, a former high school quarterback, is instinctive; and Vosean Joseph is the unit's enforcer.

Cornerback is the biggest question mark. The SEC's best tandem — Teez Tabor and Quincy Wilson — left early for the NFL. Senior Duke Dawson moves from nickel back to corner, while sophomore Chauncey Gardner moves from safety, where he earned Outback Bowl MVP honors. Fifth-year senior safety Marcell Harris (team-high 73 tackles in 2016) anchors the back end.

SPECIALISTS No team can boast a better pair of specialists. Eddy Pineiro was 21-of-25 on field goals while Johnny Townsend led the nation in punting (47.9-yard average). Florida needs Callaway to regain his form as a punt returner. He averaged 15.5 yards and scored twice in 2015 but averaged 8.4 yards and failed to score last season.

FINAL ANALYSIS Two trips to Atlanta for the SEC title game are an impressive start to McElwain's regime. The next step will be more difficult. The 55-year-old coach will get a feel for his Gators quickly. Florida opens 2017 against Michigan in AT&T Stadium, home to the Dallas Cowboys. Tennessee visits on Week 3 to begin a stretch of five SEC games, including visits from LSU and Texas A&M.

McElwain is just 3–7 against ranked opponents. That will have to change, or 2017 could be a step back for his program.



ANTONIO CALLAWAY

"I think you can still bully them. As good as their corners are, you don't want to throw the ball all the time. You'd rather just pound them a bit."

– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	81	**Antonio Callaway (Jr.)**	16	Freddie Swain (So.)
WR	89	Tyrie Cleveland (So.)	10	Josh Hammond (So.)
WR	4	**Brandon Powell (Sr.)**	9	Dre Massey (Jr.)
LT	73	**Martez Ivey (Jr.)**	76	Kadeem Telfort (Fr.)
LG	64	**Tyler Jordan (Jr.)**	61	Brett Heggie (Fr.)
C	59	T.J. McCoy (So.)	64	Tyler Jordan (Jr.)
RT	74	**Fred Johnson (Jr.)**	66	Nick Buchanan (So.)
RT	65	**Jawaan Taylor (So.)**	72	Stone Forsythe (So.)
TE	30	**DeAndre Goolsby (Sr.)**	80	**C'yontai Lewis (Jr.)**
QB	13	Feleipe Franks (Fr.)	11	Kyle Trask (Fr.)
RB	25	**Jordan Scarlett (Jr.)**	22	Lamical Perine (So.)

DEFENSE (3)

DE	92	Jabari Zuniga (So.)	95	Keivonnis Davis (Jr.)
NT	54	Khairi Clark (Jr.)	55	Kyree Campbell (Fr.)
DT	93	Taven Bryan (Jr.)		Tedarrell Slaton (Fr.)
DE	96	Cece Jefferson (Jr.)	17	**Jordan Sherit (Sr.)**
SLB	28	Kylan Johnson (So.)	50	Jeremiah Moon (Fr.)
MLB	33	David Reese (So.)	43	Cristian Garcia (Sr.)
WLB	11	Vosean Joseph (So.)	84	Camrin Knight (Jr.)
CB	7	**Duke Dawson (Sr.)**	35	Joseph Putu (Sr.)
CB	23	Chauncey Gardner (So.)		CJ Henderson (Fr.)
S	8	Nick Washington (Sr.)	27	Quincy Lenton (Fr.)
S	26	**Marcell Harris (Sr.)**	29	Jeawon Taylor (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	Eddy Pineiro (Jr.)	KR	17	Kadarius Toney (Fr.)
P	19	Johnny Townsend (Sr.)	PR	81	Antonio Callaway (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Luke Del Rio, 201-114-1,358-8, 8 TDs
Rushing: Jordan Scarlett, 179 att., 889 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Antonio Callaway, 54 rec., 721 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Marcell Harris, 73
Sacks: Jabari Zuniga, 5.0
Interceptions: Chauncey Gardner, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jim McElwain
Record at School: 19-8 (2 years)
Career Record: 41-24 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Doug Nussmeier
Defensive Coordinator: Randy Shannon
Gainesville, FL • Ben Hill Griffin Stadium (88,548)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

GEORGIA BULLDOGS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **15** • SEC EAST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-4, 6-2 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Appalachian State
Sept.	9	at Notre Dame
Sept.	16	Samford
Sept.	23	Mississippi State
Sept.	30	at Tennessee
Oct.	7	at Vanderbilt
Oct.	14	Missouri
Oct.	28	vs. Florida #
Nov.	4	South Carolina
Nov.	11	at Auburn
Nov.	18	Kentucky
Nov.	25	at Georgia Tech

#Jacksonville, FL

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 4-4 SEC

Sept.	3	vs. North Carolina #	W	33-24
Sept.	10	Nicholls	W	26-24
Sept.	17	at Missouri	W	28-27
Sept.	24	at Ole Miss	L	14-45
Oct.	1	Tennessee	L	31-34
Oct.	9	at South Carolina	W	28-14
Oct.	15	Vanderbilt	L	16-17
Oct.	29	vs. Florida %	L	10-24
Nov.	5	at Kentucky	W	27-24
Nov.	12	Auburn	W	13-7
Nov.	19	Louisiana	W	35-21
Nov.	26	Georgia Tech	L	27-28
Dec.	30	vs. TCU &	W	31-23

#Atlanta %Jacksonville &Liberty Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Isaiah Wilson, OL, Brooklyn, NY
2. Richard LeCounte III, DB, Riceboro, GA
3. D'Andre Swift, RB, Philadelphia, PA
4. Andrew Thomas, OL, Lithonia, GA
5. Jake Fromm, QB, Warner Robins, GA
6. DeAngelo Gibbs, DB, Oxford, GA
7. Netori Johnson, OL, Ellenwood, GA
8. Robert Beal, LB, Lawrenceville, GA
9. Jeremiah Holloman, WR, Covington, GA
10. Mark Webb Jr., WR, Philadelphia, PA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.5 ppg	11	102
Rushing	191.2 ypg	9	50
Passing	193.5 ypg	10	97
Total	384.7 ypg	11	87
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.0 ppg	5	35
Rushing	143.7 ypg	4	36
Passing	183.8 ypg	2	16
Total	327.5 ypg	4	16
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+8	+0.62	2	18

STAT CORNER

-1.0

Georgia averaged 3.8 points per trip inside the opponent's 40 and allowed 4.8. That minus-1.0 point margin ranked 120th in the nation.

OFFENSE Georgia fans figure their offense will improve this year, if only because it couldn't get worse. Well, that's what they thought entering last year, and it did get worse: 87th nationally in total offense, four spots worse than the season that got Mark Richt fired.

So how will it get better with three offensive line starters and the team's most dynamic player (Isaiah McKenzie) all gone? There are reasons to believe in moderate improvement.

Jacob Eason will be more comfortable in his second year as the starting quarterback. He was solid as a freshman and now will be a better leader of the offense. But Eason will need to improve his footwork and accuracy, as he was a bit lucky to have only eight interceptions, and his 55.1 completion percentage needs to improve.

The unexpected returns of Nick Chubb and Sony Michel should keep the running game from falling off even more than it did last year, when the two were relatively healthy. But Chubb and Michel need blocking help.

So it ultimately comes down to the offensive line and receivers. The coaches have recruited well to those positions, but the impact there may not be truly felt until 2018. For this season, offensive coordinator Jim Chaney has said he will "freshen up" the offense, featuring more run-pass options. And Chaney needs to do a better job of scheming around the weaknesses at receiver and line.

DEFENSE This has a chance to be one of the best defensive units in the SEC, and thus the country. It was pretty good last year, ranking 16th nationally in total defense. And it returns all but one starter (nickel back Maurice Smith), so the defense will be loaded with high-end players and has no obvious weak spot.

The front seven could be dominant, with a deep defensive line headed by Trenton Thompson and Jonathan Ledbetter. The edge rushers are both seniors who passed on entering the NFL Draft, Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy. And the inside linebackers are juniors who are adept tacklers, Roquan Smith and Natrez Patrick.

The secondary doesn't have as much star power. Safety Dominick Sanders was a first-team All-SEC pick in 2015, but his performance fell off last year, when he dealt with shoulder pain. But he's back healthy and is joined by fellow seniors Aaron Davis and Malkom Parrish, along with some talented freshmen who will push for playing time.

Given all that, it frankly will be a disappointment if Georgia isn't among the top three defenses in the SEC. And it has a chance to be dominant.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Rodrigo Blankenship had a solid freshman season (14-for-18 on field goals). The question is whether he can kick it long; he didn't hit any field goals longer than 46 yards, and his kickoffs need to improve. Punter Marshall Long was okay as a freshman, then broke his kneecap late in the season. Both will have competition in the preseason. The return spots, meanwhile, are both wide open. Receiver Terry Godwin, who has dabbled in returning punts, will get a shot to do it full-time. Mecole Hardman, a dynamic sophomore who didn't play much last year, will begin as the favorite to return kickoffs.

FINAL ANALYSIS If the defense plays up to its potential, and the offense and special teams improve even a little, Georgia has a very good chance to win its first SEC East title in five years. There's a chance to go even further, depending on how quickly the young talent develops, and how Kirby Smart improves as a head coach. And there's also a chance to disappoint, which Georgia has tended to do lately.



NICK CHUBB

"I respect what [Kirby Smart] does on defense, but I would say he's not the most problematic of everyone we play."

– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	5	Terry Godwin (Jr.)	2	Jayson Stanley (Jr.)	
WR	6	Javon Wims (Sr.)	82	Michael Chigbu (Jr.)	
WR	8	Riley Ridley (So.)	9	Jeremiah Holloman (Fr.)	
LT	77	**Isaiah Wynn (Sr.)**		Isaiah Wilson (Fr.)	
LG	55	Dyshon Sims (Sr.)	58	Pat Allen (So.)	
C	53	**Lamont Gaillard (Jr.)**	55	Dyshon Sims (Sr.)	
RG	66	Solomon Kindley (Fr.)	74	Ben Cleveland (So.)	
RT	70	Aulden Bynum (Sr.)	78	D'Marcus Hayes (Jr.)	
TE	18	Isaac Nauta (So.)	83	**Jeb Blazevich (Sr.)**	
QB	10	**Jacob Eason (So.)**	11	Jake Fromm (Fr.)	
RB	27	**Nick Chubb (Sr.)**	1	Sony Michel (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (11)

DE	13	Jonathan Ledbetter (Jr.)	51	David Marshall (So.)
NT	97	**John Atkins (Sr.)**	96	D. Hawkins-Muckle (Jr.)
DL	78	**Trenton Thompson (Jr.)**	5	Julian Rochester (So.)
OLB	7	**Lorenzo Carter (Sr.)**	15	D'Andre Walker (Jr.)
ILB	3	**Roquan Smith (Jr.)**	45	**Reggie Carter (Sr.)**
ILB	6	**Natrez Patrick (Jr.)**	32	Monty Rice (Fr.)
OLB	17	**Davin Bellamy (Sr.)**	91	Chauncey Manac (Fr.)
CB	14	**Malkom Parrish (Sr.)**	26	Tyrique McGhee (So.)
CB	18	**Deandre Baker (Jr.)**	8	Deangelo Gibbs (Fr.)
FS	24	**Dominick Sanders (Sr.)**	2	Richard LeCounte III (Fr.)
SS	35	**Aaron Davis (Sr.)**	19	Jarvis Wilson (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Rodrigo Blankenship (So.)	KR	4	Mecole Hardman (So.)
P	95	Marshall Long (So.)	PR	5	Terry Godwin (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jacob Eason, 370-204-2,430-8, 16 TDs
Rushing: Nick Chubb, 224 att., 1,130 yds., 8 TDs
Receiving: Terry Godwin, 38 rec., 397 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: Roquan Smith, 95
Sacks: Three players tied with 5.0
Interceptions: Dominick Sanders, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Kirby Smart
Record at School: 8-5 (1 year)
Career Record: 8-5 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Jim Chaney
Defensive Coordinator: Mel Tucker
Athens, GA • Sanford Stadium (92,746)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

KENTUCKY WILDCATS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **45** • SEC EAST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 4-4 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Southern Miss
Sept.	9	Eastern Kentucky
Sept.	16	at South Carolina
Sept.	23	Florida
Sept.	30	Eastern Michigan
Oct.	7	Missouri
Oct.	21	at Mississippi State
Oct.	28	Tennessee
Nov.	4	Ole Miss
Nov.	11	at Vanderbilt
Nov.	18	at Georgia
Nov.	25	Louisville

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 SEC

Sept.	3	Southern Miss	L	35-44
Sept.	10	at Florida	L	7-45
Sept.	17	New Mexico State	W	62-42
Sept.	24	South Carolina	W	17-10
Oct.	1	at Alabama	L	6-34
Oct.	8	Vanderbilt	W	20-13
Oct.	22	Mississippi State	W	40-38
Oct.	29	at Missouri	W	35-21
Nov.	5	Georgia	L	24-27
Nov.	12	at Tennessee	L	36-49
Nov.	19	Austin Peay	W	49-13
Nov.	26	at Louisville	W	41-38
Dec.	31	vs. Georgia Tech #	L	18-33

#TaxSlayer Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Lynn Bowden, ATH, Youngstown, OH
2. Javonte Richardson, WR, Maple Heights, OH
3. Josh Paschal, LB, Olney, MD
4. Tyrell Ajian, ATH, Mansfield, OH
5. Yusuf Corker, DB, Stockbridge, GA
6. Danny Clark, QB, Columbus, OH
7. Jordan Wright, DL, Fort Lauderdale, FL
8. Phil Hoskins, DL, Toledo, OH*
9. Alex King, LB, Mason, OH
10. Bryant Koback, RB, Holland, OH

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.0 ppg	9	58
Rushing	234.2 ypg	3	20
Passing	186.1 ypg	13	102
Total	420.2 ypg	10	61
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.3 ppg	11	86
Rushing	228.2 ypg	12	110
Passing	206.1 ypg	5	35
Total	434.2 ypg	9	85
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-7	-0.54	14	107

STAT CORNER

5.0/48.5

Kentucky allowed at least 5.0 yards on 48.5 percent of opponent carries in 2016. That was the second-highest such rate in FBS.

OFFENSE A year after Kentucky amassed the second-most rushing yards in program history (3,044), the offense figures to be run-heavy once again in 2017 with 2016 Freshman All-American Benny Snell taking over the starting job. With Boom Williams having entered the NFL Draft, it seems unlikely the Wildcats will boast two 1,000-yard rushers again, but junior Sihiem King and redshirt freshman A.J. Rose offer the speed needed to complement Snell's power running style.

Quarterback Stephen Johnson took complete ownership of the team during spring practice after leading the Wildcats to seven wins in 11 games as the No. 1 quarterback. Former starter Drew Barker is expected to be healthy again by the fall, but it would be a surprise to see anyone other than Johnson start the season opener. Johnson's ability to improve his ball security (he lost six fumbles in 2016) and intermediate passing game will go a long way to determining if the offense can be more balanced moving forward.

The offensive line could be among the best in the league even after replacing four-year starting center Jon Toth. Several veteran wide receivers return, led by seniors Garrett Johnson and Dorian Baker, but someone will need to step up to replace the big-play threat of Jeff Badet, who transferred to Oklahoma after ranking sixth in the country in yards per catch. The receivers as a whole need more consistency.

DEFENSE There's still plenty of work to be done for Kentucky's defense — especially up front — but five years into Mark Stoops' rebuilding project, parts of the unit are starting to more closely resemble the Wildcats' SEC rivals. The secondary leads the way with All-SEC contender Mike Edwards at safety and two-year starters Chris Westry and Derrick Baity at cornerback. Junior weak-side linebacker Jordan Jones was among the most productive defensive players in the league last season with 109 tackles (15.5 tackles for a loss) in his first year as a starter, and coaches believe he has the potential for even more.

Junior outside linebackers Denzil Ware and Josh Allen should account for much of Kentucky's pass rush, but if the defense is going to take a significant step forward in 2017 it will need major improvements from the defensive line. After Jimmy Brumbaugh left for Maryland, Stoops turned to former North Texas assistant Derrick LeBlanc to coach the line in hopes a new voice would spark players such as former five-star recruit Matt Elam to better performances this fall. If those veterans don't step up, several 2017 signees may be asked to contribute immediately.

SPECIALISTS After battling injuries as a sophomore, former All-SEC kicker Austin MacGinnis returned to form in 2016 and should be among the best in the country as a senior. Kentucky hopes the addition of Columbia University graduate transfer Matthew Panton will push sophomore punter Grant McKinnis, who ranked last in the SEC in yards per punt in 2016. The return game could be more aggressive under new special teams coordinator Dean Hood.

FINAL ANALYSIS Kentucky ended its six-year bowl drought last season with a bid to the TaxSlayer Bowl, and with the bulk of its offense and defense returning the Wildcats seem poised for a special season by the program's middling historic standards. If Stephen Johnson can build on the momentum of his outstanding performance in the upset of Louisville in the 2016 regular-season finale, there's plenty of talent around him for the offense to make up for some of the defense's deficiencies. If the defense improves as well, the Wildcats could be a dark horse candidate in the SEC East race.



BENNY SNELL

"I think you can still bully them. As good as their corners are, you don't want to throw the ball all the time. You'd rather just pound them a bit."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	2	**Dorian Baker (Sr.)**	19	Kayaune Ross (Jr.)
WR	9	**Garrett Johnson (Sr.)**		Lynn Bowden (Fr.)
WR	6	Blake Bone (Sr.)	11	Tavin Richardson (So.)
LT	74	**Cole Mosier (Sr.)**	67	Landon Young (So.)
LG	71	Logan Stenberg (So.)	79	Luke Fortner (Fr.)
C	65	**Bunchy Stallings (Jr.)**	52	Drake Jackson (Fr.)
RG	68	**Nick Haynes (Sr.)**	64	George Asafo-Adjei (Jr.)
RT	73	**Kyle Meadows (Sr.)**	77	Mason Wolfe (So.)
TE	87	**C.J. Conrad (Jr.)**	85	Greg Hart (Sr.)
QB	15	**Stephen Johnson (Sr.)**	7	Drew Barker (Jr.)
RB	26	Benny Snell Jr. (So.)	22	Sihiem King (Jr.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	90	T.J. Carter (So.)	92	Alvonte Bell (Jr.)
DT	99	**Adrian Middleton (Jr.)**		Phil Hoskins (Jr.)
NG	77	Naquez Pringle (Sr.)	69	Matt Elam (Sr.)
BUCK	35	**Denzil Ware (Jr.)**	31	Jamar Watson (Fr.)
MLB	51	**Courtney Love (Sr.)**	56	Kash Daniel (So.)
WLB	34	**Jordan Jones (Jr.)**	32	Eli Brown (So.)
SLB	41	**Josh Allen (Jr.)**	47	Jordan Bonner (Jr.)
CB	29	**Derrick Baity (Jr.)**	3	Jordan Griffin (So.)
CB	21	**Chris Westry (Jr.)**	6	Lonnie Johnson Jr. (Jr.)
SS	7	**Mike Edwards (Jr.)**	5	Kendall Randolph (Sr.)
FS	25	Darius West (Jr.)	9	Davonte Robinson (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	99	Austin MacGinnis (Sr.)	KR	22	Sihiem King (Jr.)
P	86	Grant McKinniss (So.)	PR	88	Charles Walker (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Stephen Johnson, 265-145-2,037-6, 13 TDs
Rushing: Benny Snell, 186 att., 1,091 yds., 13 TDs
Receiving: Garrett Johnson, 39 rec., 585 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Jordan Jones, 109
Sacks: Josh Allen, 7.0
Interceptions: Derrick Baity, 3; Mike Edwards, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mark Stoops
Record at School: 19-30 (4 years)
Career Record: 19-30 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Eddie Gran, Darin Hinshaw
Defensive Coordinator: Matt House
Lexington, KY • Commonwealth Stadium (61,000)

Tim Umphrey

MISSOURI TIGERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **55** • SEC EAST PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 1-7 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Missouri State
Sept.	9	South Carolina
Sept.	16	Purdue
Sept.	23	Auburn
Oct.	7	at Kentucky
Oct.	14	at Georgia
Oct.	21	Idaho
Oct.	28	at Connecticut
Nov.	4	Florida
Nov.	11	Tennessee
Nov.	18	at Vanderbilt
Nov.	25	at Arkansas

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 SEC

Sept.	3	at West Virginia	L	11-26
Sept.	10	Eastern Michigan	W	61-21
Sept.	17	Georgia	L	27-28
Sept.	24	Delaware State	W	79-0
Oct.	1	at LSU	L	7-42
Oct.	15	at Florida	L	14-40
Oct.	22	Middle Tennessee	L	45-51
Oct.	29	Kentucky	L	21-35
Nov.	5	at South Carolina	L	21-31
Nov.	12	Vanderbilt	W	26-17
Nov.	19	at Tennessee	L	37-63
Nov.	25	Arkansas	W	28-24

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Da'Ron Davis, WR, Lee's Summit, MO
2. Case Cook, OL, Carrollton, GA
3. Aubrey Miller Jr., LB, Memphis, TN
4. Hyrin Morrison White, OL, DeSoto, TX
5. Malik Young, DT, Marietta, GA*
6. Walter Palmore, DT, Columbus, GA*
7. Terry Petry, CB, Missouri City, TX
8. Pompey Coleman, OL, Indianapolis, IN
9. Nate Anderson, DL, Prattville, AL*
10. Taylor Powell, QB, Fayetteville, AR

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.4 ppg	5	48
Rushing	205.1 ypg	8	38
Passing	295.4 ypg	2	20
Total	500.5 ypg	1	13
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.5 ppg	12	90
Rushing	232.8 ypg	13	112
Passing	246.8 ypg	12	86
Total	479.7 ypg	14	118
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.25	11	85

STAT CORNER

6.3/6.1

Missouri's offense improved from 4.4 yards per play in 2015 to 6.3 in 2016. The defense, meanwhile, regressed from 4.3 to 6.1.

OFFENSE Mizzou's scoring average improved by nearly 18 points per game in 2016. The combination of experience and new blood — on the two-deep and in the coaching booth — served the Tigers well after woeful scoring averages in Gary Pinkel's final year in charge.

New head coach Barry Odom handed his offense to coordinator Josh Heupel, and with a depth chart young enough to return almost everybody in 2017, the Tigers began to show promise in an up-tempo spread system. The first year of Heupel's relationship with quarterback Drew Lock was promising. With a more experienced receiving corps and a couple of new toys at his disposal, Lock threw for 3,399 yards and 23 touchdowns, torching bad defenses early in the season, failing miserably against very strong LSU and Florida defenses midseason and finding a rhythm late.

Lock and receiver J'Mon Moore formed quite the November connection. After falling into a massive midseason funk, Moore caught 23 passes for 407 yards in his last three games. Meanwhile, running back Damarea Crockett, a true freshman, crossed the 1,000-yard mark by rushing for 379 yards combined in the Vanderbilt and Tennessee games. The Arkansas native runs with great vision.

A line that was starting from scratch with career backups, junior college transfers, walk-ons and duct tape should open bigger holes for Crockett, and almost all of Lock's receiving targets are back as well. Further offensive improvement would not be a surprise.

DEFENSE In seven losses in 2015 — many of them by small margins — Mizzou scored a combined 49 points. In 2016, everything flipped. The Tigers scored 45 points against Middle Tennessee — and lost. They scored 37 against Tennessee and lost by 26.

The defense cratered. Young linebackers struggled with missed tackles, and a new read-and-react style of coaching up front did no favors for the defensive line's skill set.

Odom loosened the reins up front, which should suit end Marcell Frazier well; given more attacking opportunities, Frazier had 6.5 sacks in the last three games. Tackle Terry Beckner Jr. should be healthy, too. The blue-chipper has seen each of his first two seasons end early because of knee injuries. Frazier, Beckner, a new line coach and a host of junior college signees could provide some transformation up front.

Meanwhile, the athletic potential of the linebacking corps seems high. Eric Beisel, Cale Garrett and Brandon Lee combined for 16 tackles for a loss, and nickel back/outside linebacker T.J. Warren brings a former cornerback's athleticism to the position.

If the line holds up, the biggest question mark becomes cornerback, where Mizzou must replace starters Aarion Penton and John Gibson III. Sophomores DeMarkus Acy and Christian Holmes looked the part in the spring, and if they hold their own, experience at linebacker and safety could pay dividends for a unit that was much worse than expected in 2016.

SPECIALISTS With Corey Fatony booming punts and kickoffs and Johnathon Johnson returning punts, special teams should be kind to Mizzou's field position margin. But the placekicking situation is drastically unsettled after Tucker McCann's freshman struggles in 2016; he missed four PATs and half his field goals.

FINAL ANALYSIS Missouri games were more high-scoring in 2016, and that was only partially good. The Tigers were better statistically but won one fewer game. Finishing the season with two conference wins in three tries gave the fan base a jolt of optimism, but while a seasoned offense seems to have a high ceiling, the defense has far more questions to answer than it did 12 months ago.



DREW LOCK

"(Barry) Odom called the defense later in the season, and there was a noticeable change in the packages and the way they presented themselves."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (10)

WR	**6**	**J'Mon Moore (Sr.)**	7	Nate Brown (Jr.)	
WR	**9**	**Dimetrios Mason (So.)**	84	Emanuel Hall (Jr.)	
SLOT	**12**	**Johnathon Johnson (So.)**	17	Richard Floyd (So.)	
LT	**76**	**Tyler Howell (Sr.)**	70	Yasir Durant (So.)	
LG	**71**	**Kevin Pendleton (Jr.)**	**66**	**Adam Ploudre (Sr.)**	
C	**56**	**Samson Bailey (Jr.)**	67	Jonah Dubinski (So.)	
RG	57	Alec Abeln (Sr.)	75	Tre'Vour Simms (So.)	
RT	**77**	**Paul Adams (Jr.)**	72	Kyle Mitchell (Jr.)	
TE	11	Kendall Blanton (Jr.)	10	Jason Reese (Sr.)	
QB	**3**	**Drew Lock (Jr.)**	19	Jack Lowary (Jr.)	
RB	16	Damarea Crockett (So.)	**21**	**Ish Witter (Sr.)**	

DEFENSE (3)

DE	16	Marcell Frazier (Sr.)	93	Tre Williams (Fr.)
DT	5	Terry Beckner Jr. (Jr.)	95	Rashad Brandon (Jr.)
DT	**96**	**A.J. Logan (Sr.)**		Malik Young (Jr.)
DE	88	Nate Howard (Jr.)		Nate Anderson (Jr.)
OLB	4	Brandon Lee (Jr.)	24	Terez Hall (Jr.)
MLB	38	Eric Beisel (Sr.)	47	Cale Garrett (So.)
NB	20	Kaleb Prewett (Jr.)	2	TJ Warren (So.)
CB	17	DeMarkus Acy (So.)		Terry Petry (Fr.)
CB	28	Logan Cheadle (Sr.)	21	Christian Holmes (So.)
S	7	Cam Hilton (Jr.)	**8**	**Thomas Wilson (Sr.)**
S	3	Ronnell Perkins (So.)	**22**	**Anthony Sherrils (Sr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Tucker McCann (So.)	**KR**	12 Johnathon Johnson (So.)
P	26	Corey Fatony (Jr.)	**PR**	12 Johnathon Johnson (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Drew Lock, 434-237-3,399-10, 23 TDs
Rushing: Damarea Crockett, 153 att., 1,062 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: J'Mon Moore, 62 rec., 1,012 yds., 8 TDs
Tackles: Thomas Wilson, 58
Sacks: Marcell Frazier, 7.5
Interceptions: Joey Burkett, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Barry Odom
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 4-8 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Josh Heupel
Defensive Coordinators: DeMontie Cross, Ryan Walters
Columbia, MO • Memorial Stadium (71,168)

Tim Umphrey

SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **40** • SEC EAST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-4 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. NC State #	
Sept. 9	at Missouri	
Sept. 16	Kentucky	
Sept. 23	Louisiana Tech	
Sept. 30	at Texas A&M	
Oct. 7	Arkansas	
Oct. 14	at Tennessee	
Oct. 28	Vanderbilt	
Nov. 4	at Georgia	
Nov. 11	Florida	
Nov. 18	Wofford	
Nov. 25	Clemson	

#Charlotte, NC

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 SEC

Sept. 1	at Vanderbilt	W	13-10
Sept. 10	at Mississippi State	W	27-14
Sept. 17	East Carolina	W	20-15
Sept. 24	at Kentucky	L	10-17
Oct. 1	Texas A&M	L	13-24
Oct. 9	Georgia	L	14-28
Oct. 22	Massachusetts	W	34-28
Oct. 29	Tennessee	W	24-21
Nov. 5	Missouri	W	31-21
Nov. 12	at Florida	L	7-20
Nov. 19	Western Carolina	W	44-31
Nov. 26	at Clemson	L	7-56
Dec. 29	vs. South Florida (ot) #	L	39-46

#Birmingham Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jamyest Williams, DB, Athens, GA
2. OrTre Smith, WR, Mount Pleasant, SC
3. Shi Smith, ATH, Union, SC
4. M.J. Webb, DL, Rutledge, GA
5. Brad Johnson, DL, Pendleton, SC
6. Keisean Nixon, DB, Compton, CA*
7. Chad Terrell, WR, Bogue Chitto, MS
8. Will Register, TE, Chapin, SC
9. Aaron Sterling, DL, Atlanta, GA
10. Eric Douglas, OL, Charlotte, NC

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.8 ppg	14	116
Rushing	134.4 ypg	13	108
Passing	213.2 ypg	7	83
Total	347.5 ypg	13	115
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.5 ppg	8	51
Rushing	203.2 ypg	9	90
Passing	208.7 ypg	6	39
Total	411.9 ypg	7	66
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+7	+0.54	3	24

STAT CORNER

97/85/75

Freshmen and sophomores accounted for 97% of the Gamecocks' receiving yards, 85% of the rushing yards, and 75% of passing yards in 2016.

OFFENSE For the first time in his five-year head-coaching career, Will Muschamp seems to have found the answer at quarterback. Sophomore Jake Bentley started seven games last year after skipping his senior season at Opelika (Ala.) High School to join the Gamecocks. Bentley threw for 1,420 yards, nine touchdowns and four interceptions and led South Carolina to an upset of Tennessee.

Bentley will be surrounded by plenty of offensive talent. Junior wide receiver Deebo Samuel is one of the most dynamic athletes in the SEC. He had 783 receiving yards, 98 rushing yards and seven combined touchdowns last year despite being limited throughout the first half of the season due to injury.

The running game will be paced by returning sophomores Rico Dowdle and A.J. Turner and North Carolina transfer Ty'Son Williams, but the most intriguing offensive prospect might be tight end Hayden Hurst, a former walk-on who spent two years in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization before trying college football.

DEFENSE South Carolina was 92nd in the nation in sacks last year with 21, and, believe it or not, things could get worse this year. They must replace both defensive ends, including Darius English, who led the team with 9.0 sacks in 2016.

"We have to get more guys we can count on up front," Muschamp says. "We are very thin from the standpoint of experience and guys we feel like we can win the SEC East with. I'm just being honest. We have to get faster twitch and we have to get better rushers." One name to watch is sophomore end Dennis Wonnum.

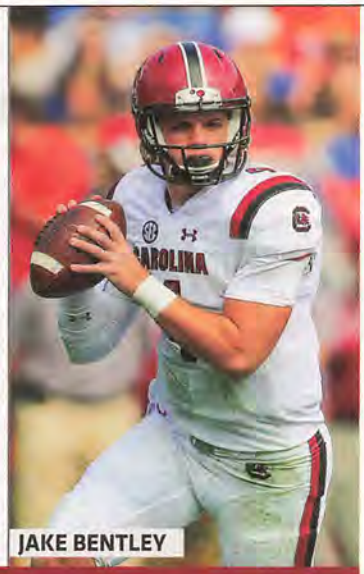
The good news is that linebacker Skai Moore, the team's leading tackler in 2013, '14 and '15, is back after missing the 2016 season due to a herniated disc in his neck that required surgery. Moore brings more speed than the team had at the position last year, which should help in Muschamp's system, and he'll join Bryson Allen-Williams and T.J. Brunson to form a talented but thin linebacking corps.

The secondary brings back every starter but still is a work in progress. South Carolina spent spring practice trying to figure out who among Rashad Fenton, Jamarcus King and Chris Lammons would play the nickel and which two would get the starting cornerback jobs. Incoming four-star recruit Jamyest Williams will get a chance to play right away. At safety, D.J. Smith and Steven Montac return but need to improve their level of play.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Elliott Fry, the school's all-time leading scorer, is gone. The Gamecocks are expected to turn to a homegrown product, Alex Woznick, to replace him. South Carolina also must find replacements for punter Sean Kelly and longtime long snapper Drew Williams. The inconsistency of the competitors at all three specialist positions was a concern for Muschamp in the spring.

FINAL ANALYSIS Muschamp and his coaching staff took over a roster so depleted that some of the struggles of the 2016 season — such as an offense that finished last in the SEC in scoring with 20.8 points per game — can hardly be held against them. It's a different story in Year 2. The Gamecocks should build on the offensive momentum established with Bentley at the helm in the last half of 2016, but Muschamp's defensive acumen will be tested by this year's thin group.

The schedule starts out with a toss-up game against NC State that could set the tone, and there are another half-dozen games on the schedule that could go either way. How South Carolina fares in those will determine whether the Gamecocks are able to make a move in the SEC East standings.



JAKE BENTLEY

"The quarterback (Jake Bentley) is really good, probably the best in the division coming back and not by just a little bit."

– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (10)

WR	1	**Deebo Samuel (Jr.)**	83	Chavis Dawkins (So.)
WR	89	**Bryan Edwards (So.)**	18	OrTre Smith (Fr.)
WR	8	Randrecous Davis (Fr.)	5	Terry Googer (Jr.)
LT	77	**Malik Young (Jr.)**	50	Sadarius Hutcherson (Fr.)
LG	69	D.J. Park (Sr.)	72	Donnell Stanley (Jr.)
C	70	**Alan Knott (Sr.)**	60	Chandler Farrell (Fr.)
RG	51	**Cory Helms (Sr.)**	55	Christian Pellage (So.)
RT	78	**Zack Bailey (Jr.)**	63	Blake Camper (Jr.)
TE	81	**Hayden Hurst (Jr.)**	3	**K.C. Crosby (Jr.)**
QB	19	**Jake Bentley (So.)**	12	Michael Scarnecchia (Jr.)
RB	23	**Rico Dowdle (So.)**	27	Ty'Son Williams (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	92	D.J. Wonnum (So.)	35	Daniel Fennell (So.)
DT	90	**Taylor Stallworth (Sr.)**	97	Kobe Smith (So.)
DT	93	**Ulric Jones (Sr.)**	5	Keir Thomas (So.)
DE	95	Dante Sawyer (Sr.)	91	Shameik Blackshear (So.)
LB	4	**Bryson Allen-Williams (Sr.)**		Davonne Bowen (Fr.)
LB	6	T.J Brunson (So.)		Damani Staley (Fr.)
LB	10	Skai Moore (Sr.)		Brad Johnson (Fr.)
CB	7	**Jamarcus King (Sr.)**	3	**Chris Lammons (Sr.)**
CB	16	Rashad Fenton (Jr.)		Jamyest Williams (Fr.)
S	24	**D.J. Smith (Sr.)**	26	Jaylin Dickerson (Fr.)
S	22	Steven Montac (Jr.)	17	Javon Charleston (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	42	Alex Woznick (Fr.)	KR	1	Deebo Samuel
P	20	Joseph Charlton (So.)	PR		Jamyest Williams

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jake Bentley, 190-125-1,420-4, 9 TDs
Rushing: Rico Dowdle, 133 att., 764 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Deebo Samuel, 59 rec., 783 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: D.J. Smith, 80
Sacks: Bryson Allen-Williams, 2.0; Keir Thomas, 2.0
Interceptions: Jamarcus King, 3; Chris Lammons, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Will Muschamp
Record at School: 6-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 34-28 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Bryan McClendon, Kurt Roper
Defensive Coordinator: Travaris Robinson
Columbia, SC • Williams-Brice Stadium (80,250)

Tom DiPace

TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **19** • SEC EAST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4, 4-4 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 4	at Georgia Tech #	
Sept. 9	Indiana State	
Sept. 16	at Florida	
Sept. 23	Massachusetts	
Sept. 30	Georgia	
Oct. 14	South Carolina	
Oct. 21	at Alabama	
Oct. 28	at Kentucky	
Nov. 4	Southern Miss	
Nov. 11	at Missouri	
Nov. 18	LSU	
Nov. 25	Vanderbilt	

#Mercedes-Benz Stadium

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 1	Appalachian State	(ot)	W	20-13
Sept. 10	vs. Virginia Tech #		W	45-24
Sept. 17	Ohio		W	28-19
Sept. 24	Florida		W	38-28
Oct. 1	at Georgia		W	34-31
Oct. 8	at Texas A&M	(ot)	L	38-45
Oct. 15	Alabama		L	10-49
Oct. 29	at South Carolina		L	21-24
Nov. 5	Tennessee Tech		W	55-0
Nov. 12	Kentucky		W	49-36
Nov. 19	Missouri		W	63-37
Nov. 26	at Vanderbilt		L	34-45
Dec. 30	vs. Nebraska %		W	38-24

#Bristol %Music City Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Trey Smith, OL, Jackson, TN
2. Ty Chandler, RB, Nashville, TN
3. Maleik Gray, S, LaVergne, TN
4. Eric Crosby, DT, Virginia Beach, VA
5. Will Ignont, LB, Huntsville, AL
6. Jordan Murphy, WR, Hattiesburg, MS
7. Cheyenne Labruzza, CB, Albany, LA
8. Matthew Butler, DT, Raleigh, NC
9. LaTrell Bumphus, TE, Savannah, TN
10. Kivon Bennett, DT, Hollywood, FL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	36.4 ppg	2	24
Rushing	205.2 ypg	7	37
Passing	238.5 ypg	5	62
Total	443.7 ypg	5	40
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.8 ppg	9	68
Rushing	218.5 ypg	11	104
Passing	230.7 ypg	10	72
Total	449.2 ypg	11	95
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-2	-0.15	10	78

STAT CORNER

+6.8

Tennessee's field position margin of +6.8 yards per drive was seventh in FBS and first in the SEC. Special teams smiled on the Vols.

OFFENSE The "T" on Tennessee's helmets might just as well stand for "transformation" with a new offensive coordinator and quarterbacks on Rocky Top. The Vols will tweak their modified spread attack to cater to their new personnel, specifically quarterbacks Quinten Dormady and Jarrett Guarantano.

Dormady is more the prototypical QB, a 6'4", 216-pound Texan with a big arm, strong pocket presence and some experience at the college level as he enters his junior year. The 6'4", 205-pound Guarantano is a redshirt freshman with dazzling mobility and an electric arm. Offensive coordinator Larry Scott — interim head coach at Miami in 2015 — is looking for efficiency and balance from the quarterback position.

The Vols' offensive line has improved greatly this offseason, thanks in large part to new strength coach Rock Gullickson, formerly of the Los Angeles Rams. It's not typically a good sign when a true freshman interjects himself into the starting lineup, but there's nothing normal about Trey Smith, ESPN.com's No. 1-rated prospect in the 2017 class. Smith enrolled early and proved he could push anyone off the line, so it has become a matter of figuring out what position he'll do the pushing from. New offensive line coach Walt Wells says the "five best will play." It's a good bet senior Jashon Robertson will be among that group as a guard or center after working at both positions in spring.

The Vols don't feature that sort of depth at tailback or receiver. John Kelly averaged 6.4 yards per carry last season. Carlin Fils-aime is unproven. Incoming freshman Ty Chandler will be among those challenging for carries. Jauan Jennings is among the most dynamic receivers returning in the SEC, but there are more questions than answers behind him in the receiving corps.

DEFENSE The priority is to shore up the run defense after a beat-up Vols' front surrendered an eye-popping average of 218.5 yards per game on the ground in 2016.

Junior end Jonathan Kongbo could measure up to his lofty ranking as the top junior college signee in 2016, though it's hard to imagine him completely filling the void left by UT all-time sacks leader Derek Barnett. The trainers might end up being the real MVPs; the Vols hope that defensive linemen Kendal Vickers (shoulder), Shy Tuttle (knee), Kahlil McKenzie (pectoral) and Kyle Phillips (shoulder) will be healthy after missing spring drills.

Junior Darrin Kirkland is back to anchor the defense after missing much of last season with a high ankle sprain, lining up at middle linebacker in what figures to be more of a 4-3 look after the Vols most often utilized a 4-2-5 last season.

Tennessee should have two of the more dynamic defensive backs in the SEC with Todd Kelly Jr. and Nigel Warrior — both the sons of former Vols first-round NFL Draft picks; Warrior is the son of former NFL All-Pro Dale Carter.

SPECIALISTS Trevor Daniel is as proven and consistent as any player on the team entering his third year as the starting punter. Aaron Medley is a fourth-year starting placekicker coming off a solid though not spectacular 2016 season. If senior Evan Berry returns from the knee injury that sidelined him in November, he might lead the nation in kick returns and earn All-American honors again.

FINAL ANALYSIS Tennessee needs to find a competent quarterback and develop playmakers if it's to compete for an SEC East Division crown. The schedule is unforgiving, with road trips to Florida and Alabama and a November visit from LSU. The Vols defense and special teams are solid, but ultimately Tennessee will only go as far as their new quarterbacks can take them.



DARRIN KIRKLAND

"Their linebackers are really bad relative to the rest of the division, so it'll be interesting to see if that gets exposed."

– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	15	**Jauan Jennings (Jr.)**	19	Jeff George (Sr.)	
WR	10	Tyler Byrd (So.)	25	Josh Smith (Sr.)	
WR	9	Marquez Callaway (So.)	17	Brandon Johnson (So.)	
LT	51	Drew Richmond (So.)	63	**Brett Kendrick (Sr.)**	
LG	66	Jack Jones (Jr.)	70	Ryan Johnson (Fr.)	
C	75	**Jashon Robertson (Sr.)**	55	**Coleman Thomas (Sr.)**	
RG	73	Trey Smith (Fr.),	50	Venzell Boulware (So.)	
RT	76	Chance Hall (Jr.)	68	Marcus Tatum (So.)	
TE	82	**Ethan Wolf (Sr.)**	44	Jakob Johnson (Sr.)	
QB	12	Quinten Dormady (Jr.)	2	Jarrett Guarantano (Fr.)	
RB	4	John Kelly (Jr.)	27	Carlin Fils-aime (So.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	1	Jonathan Kongbo (Jr.)	13	Deandre Johnson (Fr.)	
DT	39	**Kendal Vickers (Sr.)**	55	Quay Picou (Jr.)	
DT	99	Kahlil McKenzie (Jr.)	2	Shy Tuttle (Jr.)	
DE	19	Darrell Taylor (So.)	5	Kyle Phillips (Jr.)	
MLB	34	**Darrin Kirkland (Jr.)**	35	Daniel Bituli (So.)	
WLB	20	Cortez McDowell (Sr.)	14	Quart'e Sapp (So.)	
NB	7	**Rashaan Gaulden (Jr.)**	28	Baylen Buchanan (So.)	
CB	8	Justin Martin (Sr.)	3	Marquill Osborne (So.)	
CB		Shaq Wiggins (Sr.)	12	**Emmanuel Moseley (Sr.)**	
SS	24	**Todd Kelly Jr. (Sr.)**	22	**Micah Abernathy (Jr.)**	
FS	18	Nigel Warrior (So.)	29	Evan Berry (Sr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	25	Aaron Medley (Sr.)	KR	29	Evan Berry (Sr.)
P	93	Trevor Daniel (Sr.)	PR	10	Tyler Byrd (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Quinten Dormady, 17-11-148 -0, 0 TDs
Rushing: John Kelly, 98 att., 630 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Jauan Jennings, 40 rec., 580 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Todd Kelly Jr., 71
Sacks: Kendal Vickers, 2.5
Interceptions: Todd Kelly Jr., 2; Micah Abernathy, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Butch Jones
Record at School: 30-21 (4 years)
Career Record: 80-48 (10 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Larry Scott
Defensive Coordinator: Bob Shoop
Knoxville, TN • Neyland Stadium (102,455)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

VANDERBILT COMMODORES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **48** • SEC EAST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 3-5 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Middle Tennessee
Sept.	9	Alabama A&M
Sept.	16	Kansas State
Sept.	23	Alabama
Sept.	30	at Florida
Oct.	7	Georgia
Oct.	14	at Ole Miss
Oct.	28	at South Carolina
Nov.	4	Western Kentucky
Nov.	11	Kentucky
Nov.	18	Missouri
Nov.	25	at Tennessee

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 SEC

Sept.	1	South Carolina	L	10-13
Sept.	10	Middle Tennessee	W	47-24
Sept.	17	at Georgia Tech	L	7-38
Sept.	24	at Western Kentucky (ot)	W	31-30
Oct.	1	Florida	L	6-13
Oct.	8	at Kentucky	L	13-20
Oct.	15	at Georgia	W	17-16
Oct.	22	Tennessee State	W	35-17
Nov.	5	at Auburn	L	16-23
Nov.	12	at Missouri	L	17-26
Nov.	19	Ole Miss	W	38-17
Nov.	26	Tennessee	W	45-34
Dec.	26	vs. NC State #	L	17-41

#Independence Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jacob Free, QB, Brantley, AL
2. Dayo Odeyingbo, DL, Irving, TX
3. Bryce Bailey, OL, Newburgh, IN
4. Dimitri Moore, LB, Cedar Hill, TX
5. Randall Haynie, DB, Fort Lauderdale, FL
6. Jalen Pinkney, DL, Norcross, GA
7. Colin Anderson, LB, Florence, AL
8. Tae Daley, DB, Warner Robins, GA
9. Cole Clemens, OL, South Jordan, UT
10. Stone Edwards, DL, Hillsborough, NC

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.0 ppg	13	113
Rushing	164.5 ypg	10	77
Passing	191.2 ypg	11	100
Total	355.7 ypg	12	110
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.0 ppg	5	35
Rushing	163.5 ypg	6	57
Passing	244.6 ypg	11	83
Total	408.2 ypg	6	64
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.31	5	38

STAT CORNER

11

Vanderbilt scored 11 TDs in its last two SEC games after scoring a total of seven TDs in its first six league games.

OFFENSE Vanderbilt's offense emerged from a prolonged slump — going on three full seasons — with an unlikely scoring barrage in the final two regular-season games of the 2016 season. The Commodores scored a total of 83 points in wins over Ole Miss and Tennessee, the most by the program in consecutive games since scoring 95 in victories over Auburn and LSU in 1948.

The offense took a step back in the bowl game — due in part to a foot injury sustained by quarterback Kyle Shurmur — but there were enough positive signs late in the season to suggest that the Commodores could take a step forward in 2017.

Shurmur struggled through the first two-thirds of the season but surged down the stretch, flourishing in wins over Ole Miss (273 yards, two TDs) and Tennessee (416 yards, two TDs).

Shurmur's increased production was aided by the improved play of the wide receivers. Caleb Scott was the best of the bunch down the stretch, averaging 22.7 yards on his 10 receptions in the final three regular-season games. Two other seniors, C.J. Duncan and Trent Sherfield, and promising sophomore Kalija Lipscomb will form a solid four-man rotation.

Depth at running back was a huge concern at this time last year. It's now arguably the deepest position on the roster. Ralph Webb returns for his senior season after rushing for a school-record 1,283 yards. Khari Blasingame was a pleasant surprise after transitioning from linebacker. The staff raves about redshirt freshman Jamauri Wakefield.

Two starters — NFL-bound left tackle Will Holden and center Barrett Gouger — must be replaced up front, but there is enough talent and experience remaining for the Commodores to field another solid offensive line.

DEFENSE The Commodores took a small step back defensively in 2016 but still finished in the top half of the SEC in both yards (sixth) and points (tied for fifth) allowed per game. They excelled in two key areas: red zone defense and big-play prevention. Now, they must forge ahead without Zach Cunningham, arguably the best defensive player in school history.

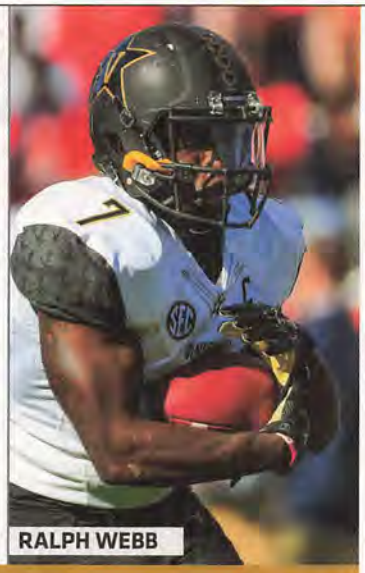
Senior Oren Burks will be tasked with replacing Cunningham at inside linebacker. Burks played most of last season at Star, a hybrid outside backer/end position.

The secondary figures to be the strength of the defense. Depending on the formation, the Commodores will at times have five seniors on the field at the same time. "That excites me," coach Derek Mason says.

Senior nose tackle Nifae Lealao anchors what Mason is calling the deepest defensive line in his four seasons at Vanderbilt. That may true, but it's still a group that loses four-year starter Adam Butler — the 2016 team leader in sacks — and key reserve Torey Agee.

SPECIALISTS The special teams were improved across the board, which no doubt helped the Commodores reach bowl eligibility. Placekicker Tommy Openshaw connected on 15-of-19 field goals, with three of the four misses from 45 yards or longer.

FINAL ANALYSIS Perhaps no program changed its trajectory in the final two weeks of the 2016 regular season more than Vanderbilt. Double-digit wins over Ole Miss and Tennessee sent the Commodores to a bowl game for the first time under Mason and showed tangible signs that the program was headed in the right direction. Sustaining success has always been difficult for Vanderbilt, but Mason has a veteran team — 20 of the projected 22 starters are in at least their third year in the program — that should remain competitive. If the offense continues to progress, Vanderbilt is likely to make another trip to the postseason.



RALPH WEBB

"I think they finally found a little bit of continuity at quarterback and having continuity at coordinator has been really big. "

– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	9	Caleb Scott (Sr.)	19	C.J. Duncan (Sr.)
WR	10	**Trent Sherfield (Sr.)**	16	**Kalija Lipscomb (So.)**
LT	58	**Justin Skule (Jr.)**	77	Devin Cochran (Fr.)
LG	57	**Ean Pfeifer (So.)**	76	Egidio DellaRipa (Jr.)
C	60	Cole Hardin (Jr.)	53	Sean Auwae-McMoore (Fr.)
RG	61	**Bruno Reagan (Jr.)**		Saige Young (Jr.)
RT	75	Bailey Granier (Jr.)	71	Jared Southers (So.)
TE	83	**Nathan Marcus (Sr.)**	80	Jared Pinkney (So.)
QB	14	**Kyle Shurmur (Jr.)**	2	Deuce Wallace (Fr.)
RB	7	**Ralph Webb (Sr.)**	23	Khari Blasingame (Jr.)
FB	39	Bailey McElwain (So.)	28	Dallas Rivers (Sr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	49	**Jonathan Wynn (Sr.)**	90	Cameron Tidd (Fr.)
NT	77	**Nifae Lealao (Sr.)**	74	Jay Woods (Sr.)
DE	34	Dare Odeyingbo (Jr.)	91	Drew Birchmeier (Fr.)
OLB	11	Charles Wright (Jr.)	42	Kenny Hebert (Fr.)
ILB	4	Emmanuel Smith (Sr.)	33	Jay Hockaday (So.)
ILB	20	**Oren Burks (Sr.)**	40	Jordan Griffin (Jr.)
OLB	25	Josh Smith (Jr.)	9	Caleb Peart (So.)
CB	8	Joejuan Williams (So.)	3	**Taurean Ferguson (Sr.)**
CB	31	**Tre Herndon (Sr.)**	21	Donovan Sheffield (Jr.)
SS	14	**Ryan White (Sr.)**	6	Zaire Jones (Fr.)
FS	2	**Arnold Tarpley (Sr.)**	5	LaDarius Wiley (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	17	Tommy Openshaw (Sr.)	KR	19	C.J. Duncan (Sr.)
P	19	Sam Loy (So.)	PR	16	Kalija Lipscomb (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kyle Shurmur, 375-204-2,409-10, 9 TDs
Rushing: Ralph Webb, 250 att., 1,283 yds., 13 TDs
Receiving: C.J. Duncan, 44 rec., 494 yds., 0 TDs
Tackles: LaDarius Wiley, 76
Sacks: Oren Burks, 3.5
Interceptions: Tre Herndon, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Derek Mason
Record at School: 13-24 (3 years)
Career Record: 13-24 (3 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Andy Ludwig
Defensive Coordinator: Derek Mason
Nashville, TN • Vanderbilt Stadium (40,550)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

NATIONAL FORECAST: **1** • SEC WEST PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **12-1, 7-1 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Florida State #	
Sept. 9	Fresno State	
Sept. 16	Colorado State	
Sept. 23	at Vanderbilt	
Sept. 30	Ole Miss	
Oct. 7	at Texas A&M	
Oct. 14	Arkansas	
Oct. 21	Tennessee	
Nov. 4	LSU	
Nov. 11	at Mississippi State	
Nov. 18	Mercer	
Nov. 25	at Auburn	

#Atlanta, GA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 14-1, 8-0 SEC

Sept. 3	vs. USC #	W	52-6
Sept. 10	Western Kentucky	W	38-10
Sept. 17	at Ole Miss	W	48-43
Sept. 24	Kent State	W	48-0
Oct. 1	Kentucky	W	34-6
Oct. 8	at Arkansas	W	39-20
Oct. 15	at Tennessee	W	49-10
Oct. 22	Texas A&M	W	33-14
Nov. 5	at LSU	W	10-0
Nov. 12	Mississippi State	W	51-3
Nov. 19	Chattanooga	W	31-3
Nov. 26	Auburn	W	30-12
Dec. 3	vs. Florida %	W	54-16
Dec. 31	vs. Washington &	W	24-7
Jan. 9	vs. Clemson $	L	31-35

#Arlington %Atlanta &Peach Bowl; CFB Playoff Semifinal
$CFB Playoff Championship

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Najee Harris, RB, Antioch, CA
2. Alex Leatherwood, OL, Pensacola, FL
3. Dylan Moses, LB, Baton Rouge, LA
4. Jerry Jeudy, WR, Deerfield Beach, FL
5. LaBryan Ray, DL, Madison, AL
6. Tua Tagovailoa, QB, Ewa Beach, HI
7. Jedrick Wills, OL, Lexington, KY
8. Xavier McKinney, DB, Roswell, GA
9. Devonta Smith, WR, Amite, AL
10. Henry Ruggs III, WR, Montgomery, AL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.8 ppg	1	16
Rushing	245.0 ypg	2	12
Passing	210.3 ypg	8	87
Total	455.3 ypg	4	34
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	13.0 ppg	1	1
Rushing	63.9 ypg	1	1
Passing	197.9 ypg	4	24
Total	261.8 ypg	1	1
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+10	+0.67	1	17

STAT CORNER

4.0

Alabama allowed a nation-leading 4.0 yards per play and hasn't allowed above 5.0 per play since 2006, pre-Nick Saban.

OFFENSE New offensive coordinator Brian Daboll will have one advantage Lane Kiffin never had at Alabama: Jalen Hurts becomes the first starting Crimson Tide quarterback to return since AJ McCarron did so in 2013. It comes with a catch — all three of last year's scholarship backups transferred. True freshmen Tua Tagovailoa and Mac Jones enrolled in time for spring practice, but they're the only other quarterbacks outside of walk-on Montana Murphy. That makes Hurts' durability all the more crucial in his second season.

Year 2 with Hurts needs to show more production from the passing game even after losing three of the top receivers from last season. That puts much of the burden on junior Calvin Ridley. He's been a deep-ball threat in his first two seasons but could add the intermediate routes across to the middle to his game. That role fell to ArDarius Stewart and O.J. Howard in the past, but both are in the NFL. This creates an opportunity for veterans Cam Sims and Robert Foster — talented players who haven't been able to crack the rotation with big names topping the depth chart. True freshman Jerry Jeudy is a five-star recruit to watch.

The running game, again, appears to be the offensive route to success. Hurts proved himself last fall as the second-leading rusher (954 yards) who added a challenging dimension for opposing defenses. Bo Scarbrough showed his enormous potential in the SEC Championship Game and Peach Bowl before going down with another injury in the national title game. Oh, and Damien Harris is back after rushing for over 1,000 yards on a 7.1-yard average.

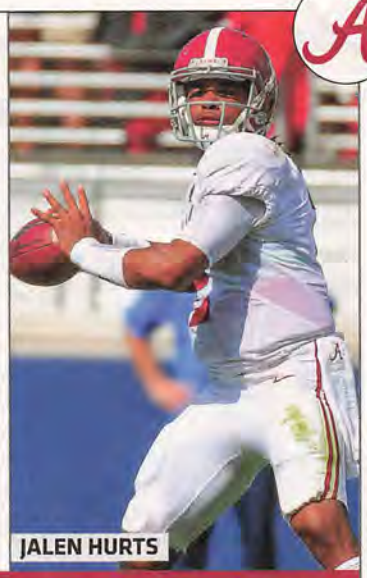
DEFENSE There's a lot to replace in the front seven with five 2016 starters now in the NFL. Da'Ron Payne and Da'Shawn Hand will be critical pieces on a defensive line that'll be without National Defensive Player of the Year Jonathan Allen for the first time in four years. Junior college transfer Isaiah Buggs will help along with young talents such as Raekwon Davis, Quinnen Williams and Joshua Frazier.

Shaun Dion Hamilton's recovery from a December ACL tear will be crucial at middle linebacker. Rashaan Evans' presence will help in the middle, with youngsters Terrell Hall, Anfernee Jennings and Christian Miller competing for time on the outside where Ryan Anderson and Tim Williams dominated previously. The departed players set a high bar for their replacements with their ability to impact opposing passers. Alabama led the nation with 54.0 sacks last season.

Key starters return in the secondary with Minkah Fitzpatrick, Ronnie Harrison and Anthony Averett protecting the back end. The secondary should remain a strength of the defense.

SPECIALISTS The punting situation is covered with JK Scott back for his fourth year of service for the Tide. The 6'6" Colorado native has been a key asset in the field position battles during close games. Placekicking figures to come down to a competition between Andy Pappanastos, a transfer from Ole Miss, and true freshman Joseph Bulovas. Consistency has been fleeting here for years, so there's a lot to prove for whoever comes next.

FINAL ANALYSIS This figures to be a classic Nick Saban team. The offense will be rooted in its ability to run the ball with a deep group of backs and a dangerous quarterback in Hurts. How Alabama rebuilds the front seven will say a lot about the effectiveness of a defense hit especially hard by graduation. The opening weekend should be tremendous — a matchup with Florida State in Atlanta's new dome. The result won't knock the loser from playoff talk, but it'll add a degree of difficulty before conference play even starts.



JALEN HURTS

"Until someone beats them, I'd say they're the team to beat. They get whoever they want in recruiting – like, really, anybody they want."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	**3**	**Calvin Ridley (Jr.)**	81	Derek Kief (Jr.)
WR	17	Cam Sims (Sr.)	4	Jerry Jeudy (Fr.)
WR	1	Robert Foster (Sr.)	16	T.J. Simmons (So.)
LT	**73**	**Jonah Williams (So.)**	76	Scott Lashley (Fr.)
LG	**71**	**Ross Pierschbacher (Jr.)**	59	Dallas Warmack (Jr.)
C	**75**	**Bradley Bozeman (Sr.)**	63	J.C. Hassenauer (Sr.)
RG	66	Lester Cotton (Jr.)	65	Deonte Brown (Fr.)
RT	77	Matt Womack (So.)	78	Elliot Baker (Jr.)
TE	87	Miller Forristall (So.)	84	Hale Hentges (Jr.)
QB	**2**	**Jalen Hurts (So.)**	13	Tua Tagovailoa (Fr.)
RB	**34**	**Damien Harris (Jr.)**	9	Bo Scarbrough (Jr.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	9	Da'Shawn Hand (Sr.)	49	Isaiah Buggs (Jr.)
NG	**94**	**Da'Ron Payne (Jr.)**	99	Raekwon Davis (So.)
DE	69	Joshua Frazier (Sr.)	92	Quinnen Williams (Fr.)
OLB	47	Christian Miller (Jr.)	16	Jamey Mosley (Jr.)
ILB	**20**	**Shaun Dion Hamilton (Sr.)**	42	Keith Holcombe (Jr.)
ILB	32	Rashaan Evans (Sr.)	6	Dylan Moses (Fr.)
OLB	33	Anfernee Jennings (So.)	24	Terrell Hall (So.)
CB	**28**	**Anthony Averett (Sr.)**	**2**	**Tony Brown (Sr.)**
CB	7	Trevon Diggs (So.)	13	Nigel Knott (Fr.)
S	**15**	**Ronnie Harrison (Jr.)**	6	Hootie Jones (Sr.)
S	**29**	**Minkah Fitzpatrick (Jr.)**	21	Jared Mayden (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Joseph Bulovas (Fr.)	**KR**	21	B.J. Emmons (So.)
P	15	JK Scott (Sr.)	**PR**	7	Trevon Diggs (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jalen Hurts, 382-240-2,780-9, 23 TDs
Rushing: Damien Harris, 146 att., 1,037 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Calvin Ridley, 72 rec., 769 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Ronnie Harrison, 86
Sacks: Rashaan Evans, 4.0
Interceptions: Minkah Fitzpatrick, 6

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Nick Saban
Record at School: 119-19 (10 years)
Career Record: 210-61-1 (21 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Brian Daboll, Mike Locksley
Defensive Coordinator: Jeremy Pruitt
Tuscaloosa, AL • Bryant-Denny Stadium (101,821)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **29** • SEC WEST PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 3-5 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	vs. Florida A&M #
Sept.	9	TCU
Sept.	23	vs. Texas A&M %
Sept.	30	New Mexico State
Oct.	7	at South Carolina
Oct.	14	at Alabama
Oct.	21	Auburn
Oct.	28	at Ole Miss
Nov.	4	Coastal Carolina
Nov.	11	at LSU
Nov.	18	Mississippi State
Nov.	25	Missouri

#Little Rock %Arlington, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 7-6, 3-5 SEC

Sept.	3	Louisiana Tech	W	21-20
Sept.	10	at TCU (ot)	W	41-38
Sept.	17	Texas State	W	42-3
Sept.	24	vs. Texas A&M #	L	24-45
Oct.	1	vs. Alcorn State %	W	52-10
Oct.	8	Alabama	L	30-49
Oct.	15	Ole Miss	W	34-30
Oct.	22	at Auburn	L	3-56
Nov.	5	Florida	W	31-10
Nov.	12	LSU	L	10-38
Nov.	19	at Mississippi State	W	58-42
Nov.	25	at Missouri	L	24-28
Dec.	29	vs. Virginia Tech &	L	24-35

#Arlington %Little Rock &Belk Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Chevin Calloway, CB, Dallas, TX
2. Montaric Brown, S, Ashdown, AR
3. Brandon Martin, WR, Monroe, LA*
4. Jeremy Patton, TE, Indianapolis, IN*
5. Chase Hayden, RB, Memphis, TN
6. Daulton Hyatt, QB, Attalla, AL
7. Kamren Curl, CB, Muskogee, OK
8. Dalton Wagner, OL, Spring Grove, IL
9. Maleek Barkley, WR, Austin, TX
10. Jarrod Barnes, WR, Cabot, AR

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.3 ppg	8	57
Rushing	164.2 ypg	11	78
Passing	264.2 ypg	3	32
Total	428.4 ypg	8	54
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.1 ppg	10	85
Rushing	205.5 ypg	10	94
Passing	221.2 ypg	8	58
Total	426.6 ypg	8	76
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.31	13	90

STAT CORNER

-1.5

Arkansas' combined regression of 1.5 yards per play (0.8 yards lower on offense, 0.7 yards higher on defense) was fifth worst in FBS.

OFFENSE For Arkansas to become a factor in the rigorous SEC West, the Razorbacks will need to make strides in red zone conversions, pass protection and short-yardage running.

Quarterback Austin Allen was strong in the first half of 2016, with 18 touchdowns and six interceptions and a 63 percent completion rate through seven games, including a 400-yard game against Alabama. However, after a bruised knee at Auburn, he was much less comfortable the rest of the way, with seven touchdowns, nine interceptions and a 58.8 percent rate. Red zone struggles, including interceptions, cropped up in losses to Alabama, Texas A&M and Missouri.

Running backs Rawleigh Williams and Devwah Whaley should form one of the best duos in the SEC, and they should benefit from a marginally better offensive line with four starters returning, anchored by center Frank Ragnow. Fullback Kendrick Jackson is a powerful lead blocker. The Razorbacks must improve on their 35 sacks allowed.

Jared Cornelius is the most experienced returning receiver, and there's plenty of opportunity around him. A fleet of inexperienced wideouts will have to fill the void, starting with junior college transfers Brandon Martin and Jonathan Nance, and including Deon Stewart, La'Michael Pettway and Jordan Jones. T.J. Hammonds will work as a slot receiver and backup tailback.

DEFENSE After the Arkansas defense allowed an FBS-worst and school-record 39 rushing touchdowns, coordinator Robb Smith found a job at Minnesota, and secondary coach Paul Rhoads stepped into his second stint as an SEC defensive coordinator. Rhoads and Bret Bielema have switched to a base 3-4 front after the Razorbacks' 4-3 was gashed repeatedly on the ground by SEC teams, which averaged 257.6 rushing yards per game vs. Arkansas.

Bijhon Jackson and Austin Capps are expected to be the first two nose guards, while McTelvin Agim and Armon Watts lead the pack of largely inexperienced defensive ends. Redshirt freshmen Briston Guidry and Jonathan Marshall should impact the rotation.

The Razorbacks struggled with linebacker depth recently, and they're adding a spot to the unit — though the outside positions will utilize some of the roster's would-be ends. Randy Ramsey manned the Razor and Karl Roesler the Hog in spring. Dre Greenlaw, who sat out spring recovering from foot surgery, is the top inside linebacker, with Grant Harris, De'Jon Harris and Josh Harris expected to contribute.

Kevin Richardson's recovery from a torn pectoral muscle will give the Razorbacks six defensive backs with starting experience, including safeties Josh Liddell, De'Andre Coley and Santos Ramirez. Ryan Pulley is probably one of the SEC's more underrated cover corners. Henre' Toliver and Britto Tutt also figure in at cornerback and/or nickel.

SPECIALISTS Junior Cole Hedlund has a leg up on Connor Limpert and Jon Fagg to re-claim the placekicking job. The Razorbacks must replace standout Toby Baker at punter, and Blake Johnson is in position to win the role. Cornelius has been an above-average punt returner the last couple of seasons.

FINAL ANALYSIS A defense that struggled in 2016 has gotten younger, but there is renewed enthusiasm that the scheme change under Rhoads' watch will lead to better results. The offense has potential, but some untested receivers will need to step up to complement Cornelius, and Allen must continue to progress.

Another winning record and bowl game is highly likely, but the Hogs will have to show significant improvement all the way around to contend in the SEC West.



AUSTIN ALLEN

"I think their offensive coordinator (Dan Enos) is awesome. There's just a lot of little things you pick up watching them and go, 'That's a hell of an idea.'"
— An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	1	Jared Cornelius (Sr.)	5	Brandon Martin (So.)	
WR	13	Deon Stewart (So.)	10	Jordan Jones (Fr.)	
WR	34	Kendrick Jackson (Jr.)	**32**	**Hayden Johnson (So.)**	
LT	74	Colton Jackson (So.)	57	Shane Clenin (Fr.)	
LG	**51**	**Hjalte Froholdt (Jr.)**	73	Deion Malone (Jr.)	
C	**72**	**Frank Ragnow (Sr.)**	75	Zach Rogers (Jr.)	
RG	62	Johnny Gibson (Jr.)	**50**	**Jake Raulerson (Sr.)**	
RT	**60**	**Brian Wallace (Jr.)**	79	Jalen Merrick (So.)	
TE	44	Austin Cantrell (So.)	85	Cheyenne O'Grady (So.)	
QB	**8**	**Austin Allen (Sr.)**	4	Ty Storey (So.)	
TB	**22**	**Rawleigh Williams (Jr.)**	21	Devwah Whaley (So.)	

DEFENSE (5)

DE	3	McTelvin Agim (So.)	7	Briston Guidry (Fr.)	
NG	41	Austin Capps (So.)	78	Bijhon Jackson (Sr.)	
DE	90	Armon Watts (Jr.)	52	T.J. Smith (So.)	
RZR	10	Randy Ramsey (Jr.)	35	Dwayne Eugene (Sr.)	
MLB	8	De'Jon Harris (So.)	31	Grant Morgan (Fr.)	
WLB	**23**	**Dre Greenlaw (Jr.)**	45	Josh Harris (Jr.)	
HOG	96	Karl Roester (Sr.)	91	Michael Taylor II (Jr.)	
CB	**11**	**Ryan Pulley (Jr.)**	13	Nate Dalton (So.)	
CB	**5**	**Henre' Toliver (Sr.)**	30	Kevin Richardson II (Sr.)	
FS	**28**	**Josh Liddell (Sr.)**	38	Reid Miller (Jr.)	
SS	20	De'Andre Coley (Sr.)	**9**	**Santos Ramirez (Jr.)**	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	9	Cole Hedlund (Jr.)	KR	6	T.J. Hammonds (So.)
P	18	Blake Johnson (So.)	PR	1	Jared Cornelius (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Austin Allen, 401-245-3,430-15, 25 TDs
Rushing: Rawleigh Williams, 245 att., 1,360 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Jared Cornelius, 32 rec., 515 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Josh Liddell, 63
Sacks: Three players tied with 2.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bret Bielema
Record at School: 25-26 (4 years)
Career Record: 93-50 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Dan Enos
Defensive Coordinator: Paul Rhoads
Fayetteville, AR • Reynolds Razorback Stadium (72,000)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

AUBURN TIGERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **9** • SEC WEST PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9–3, 6–2 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Georgia Southern
Sept.	9	at Clemson
Sept.	16	Mercer
Sept.	23	at Missouri
Sept.	30	Mississippi State
Oct.	7	Ole Miss
Oct.	14	at LSU
Oct.	21	at Arkansas
Nov.	4	at Texas A&M
Nov.	11	Georgia
Nov.	18	UL Monroe
Nov.	25	Alabama

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 SEC

Sept.	3	Clemson	L	13-19
Sept.	10	Arkansas State	W	51-14
Sept.	17	Texas A&M	L	16-29
Sept.	24	LSU	W	18-13
Oct.	1	ULM	W	58-7
Oct.	8	at Mississippi State	W	38-14
Oct.	22	Arkansas	W	56-3
Oct.	29	at Ole Miss	W	40-29
Nov.	5	Vanderbilt	W	23-16
Nov.	12	at Georgia	L	7-13
Nov.	19	Alabama A&M	W	55-0
Nov.	26	at Alabama	L	12-30
Jan.	2	vs. Oklahoma #	L	19-35

#Sugar Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Calvin Ashley, OL, Washington, DC
2. Jarrett Stidham, QB, Stephenville, TX*
3. T.D. Moultry, LB, Birmingham, AL
4. Nick Brahms, OL, Navarre, FL
5. Devan Barrett, RB, Tampa, FL
6. Big Cat Bryant, LB, Cordele, GA
7. Austin Troxell, OL, Gurley, AL
8. Malcolm Askew, DB, McCalla, AL
9. Alaric Williams, RB, Southside, AL
10. Noah Igbinoghene, WR, Trussville, AL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	31.2 ppg	6	49
Rushing	271.3 ypg	1	6
Passing	169.5 ypg	14	112
Total	440.8 ypg	6	43
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	17.1 ppg	4	7
Rushing	132.8 ypg	3	27
Passing	229.2 ypg	9	67
Total	361.9 ypg	5	28
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	6	42

STAT CORNER

4.8

Auburn's defense improved by improving out of the gates. The Tigers allowed 4.8 yards per play on first down, 11th in FBS.

OFFENSE Consistency. That's what head coach Gus Malzahn was in search of when he lured Chip Lindsey back from the desert. The former Arizona State offensive coordinator made a name for himself as a high school coach in Alabama and is charged with transforming Auburn's offense from a flash in the pan to a consistent force. The running game should be in good hands with the return of SEC leading rusher Kamryn Pettway (in yards per game) and the ultra-versatile Kerryon Johnson.

The addition of junior college transfer and former Baylor quarterback Jarrett Stidham (12 touchdowns, two interceptions at Baylor in 2015) should add more depth at quarterback. Returning starter Sean White was solid when he was healthy last year, but four injuries in two seasons — including a broken arm suffered in the Sugar Bowl — make it impossible to assume that he will be able to withstand a full season as the Tigers' signal-caller. If Stidham can open up the offense on a consistent basis with his arm, the Tigers should achieve that much-needed balance and become an offensive power.

Stidham made a smooth transition to the new offense during spring practice.

"Some of the similarities that (Coach Lindsey) has with what I've done at Baylor, some of the deeper passing game, it's been a lot of fun," Stidham says. "A lot of it, I've done before. Kind of second nature with some of it. He brings a lot of excitement to the offensive room."

DEFENSE There's no question that the defense will take a step back without defensive end Carl Lawson, tackle Montravius Adams and safety Rudy Ford. Making sure it's only a small step back is coordinator Kevin Steele's biggest challenge.

The defensive front is loaded with talented players such as end Marlon Davidson — who started as a true freshman — tackle Derrick Brown and end/tackle Byron Cowart. Who will step up and be the focal point like Lawson was, though? Deshaun Davis and Tre' Williams are entrenched at linebacker, and Tray Matthews has seen it all throughout his career at Georgia and Auburn.

"We've got a defense coming back that has a lot of guys back with a lot of experience who were very successful and you know, just building a format," Malzahn says. "In our league, there's nothing like experience, especially quality experience. There's been success, and when you look at our team, the thing I'm excited about is we've got a lot of experience back."

The potential is there for this crew to be one of the SEC's best, but some younger players up front have to grow up.

SPECIALISTS There aren't many kickers in the country more reliable than Daniel Carlson, and he returns after flirting with the NFL. Having a weapon like Carlson is huge for Malzahn, who can afford to take a few more chances with his play calling once the Tigers are in field goal range. Ian Shannon is an unknown at punter and is the biggest question mark. The Tigers have a host of candidates to fill the roles in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS Auburn was in the College Football Playoff mix well into November last season before injuries took their toll. The core of that offense is back, along with seven of 11 starters on defense. The addition of Stidham and presence of a new voice in Lindsey should propel the Tigers into that same conversation in 2017. If they're not, athletics director Jay Jacobs will have some tough decisions to make after the season. This Tigers team is too loaded to be an afterthought on the national level.



KAMRYN PETTWAY

"Why haven't they been as good offensively? I wish I had an answer for that. I think it came down to inconsistency at quarterback."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	11	Kyle Davis (So.)	3	Nate Craig-Myers (So.)	
WR	83	**Ryan Davis (Jr.)**	12	Eli Stove (So.)	
WR	81	**Darius Slayton (So.)**	4	Jason Smith (Sr.)	
LT	78	**Darius James (Sr.)**	76	Prince Tega Wanogho (So.)	
LG	77	Marquel Harrell (So.)	64	Mike Horton (So.)	
C	73	**Austin Golson (Sr.)**	54	Kaleb Kim (So.)	
RG	64	Mike Horton (So.)		Wilson Bell (Sr.)	
RT	71	**Braden Smith (Sr.)**		Calvin Ashley (Fr.)	
TE	85	Jalen Harris (Jr.)	80	Sal Cannella (So.)	
QB	8	Jarrett Stidham (So.)	13	**Sean White (Jr.)**	
RB	36	**Kamryn Pettway (Jr.)**	21	Kerryon Johnson (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DT	95	**Dontavius Russell (Jr.)**	5	Derrick Brown (So.)	
DT	79	Andrew Williams (Jr.)	9	Byron Cowart (Jr.)	
DE	3	**Marlon Davidson (So.)**	9	Byron Cowart (Jr.)	
BUCK	10	Paul James III (Sr.)	4	Jeff Holland (Jr.)	
OLB	57	**Deshaun Davis (Jr.)**	48	Montavious Atkinson (Jr.)	
MLB	30	Tre' Williams (Sr.)	49	**Darrell Williams (Jr.)**	
NB	20	Jeremiah Dinson (So.)	24	Daniel Thomas (So.)	
CB	6	**Carlton Davis (Jr.)**	22	John Broussard Jr. (So.)	
CB	13	Javaris Davis (So.)	12	Jamel Dean (So.)	
S	28	**Tray Matthews (Sr.)**	19	Nick Ruffin (Sr.)	
S	14	**Stephen Roberts (Sr.)**	8	Marlon Character Jr. (Fr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	38	Daniel Carlson (Sr.)	KR	21	Kerryon Johnson (Jr.)
P	43	Ian Shannon (So.)	PR	5	John Franklin III (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Sean White, 208-133-1679-3, 9 TDs
Rushing: Kamryn Pettway, 209 att., 1,224 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Ryan Davis, 25 rec., 194 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Tray Matthews, 76
Sacks: Andrew Williams, 3.0
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Gus Malzahn
Record at School: 35-18 (4 years)
Career Record: 44-21 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Chip Lindsey
Defensive Coordinator: Kevin Steele
Auburn, AL • Jordan-Hare Stadium (87,451)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

LSU TIGERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **11** • SEC WEST PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-3, 5-3 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. BYU #	
Sept. 9	Chattanooga	
Sept. 16	at Mississippi State	
Sept. 23	Syracuse	
Sept. 30	Troy	
Oct. 7	at Florida	
Oct. 14	Auburn	
Oct. 21	at Ole Miss	
Nov. 4	at Alabama	
Nov. 11	Arkansas	
Nov. 18	at Tennessee	
Nov. 25	Texas A&M	

#Houston, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-4, 5-3 SEC

Sept. 3	vs. Wisconsin #	L	14-16
Sept. 10	Jacksonville State	W	34-13
Sept. 17	Mississippi State	W	23-20
Sept. 24	at Auburn	L	13-18
Oct. 1	Missouri	W	42-7
Oct. 15	Southern Miss	W	45-10
Oct. 22	Ole Miss	W	38-21
Nov. 5	Alabama	L	0-10
Nov. 12	at Arkansas	W	38-10
Nov. 19	Florida	L	10-16
Nov. 24	at Texas A&M	W	54-39
Dec. 31	vs. Louisville %	W	29-9

#Green Bay %Citrus Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. JaCoby Stevens, S, Murfreesboro, TN
2. K'Lavon Chaisson, LB, Houston, TX
3. Austin Deculus, OL, Cypress, TX
4. Tyler Shelvin, NT, Lafayette, LA
5. Jacob Phillips, LB, Nashville, TN
6. Grant Delpit, S, Houston, TX
7. Todd Harris Jr., S, Plaquemine, LA
8. Kary Vincent Jr., CB, Port Arthur, TX
9. Myles Brennan, QB, Long Beach, MS
10. Edward Ingram, OL, DeSoto, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.3 ppg	10	68
Rushing	233.0 ypg	4	21
Passing	190.1 ypg	12	101
Total	423.1 ypg	9	59
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	15.8 ppg	2	5
Rushing	117.3 ypg	2	13
Passing	197.2 ypg	3	23
Total	314.4 ypg	3	10
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
0	0.00	9	67

STAT CORNER

37.9

LSU averaged 37.9 points per game in eight wins in 2016. In four losses, the Tigers scored a total of 37. The Tigers were all or nothing.

OFFENSE New LSU coach Ed Orgeron sensed that a change of culture was needed at LSU after 12 years of being wedded to old-school, Power-I principles under former coach Les Miles. Enter new offensive coordinator Matt Canada from Pittsburgh. He's an avant-garde offensive mind who helped hand national champion Clemson its only loss (43–42) last season. Canada is expected to deliver more passing and a lot more misdirection. Think jet sweeps and multiple pre-snap shifts.

Senior quarterback Danny Etling is LSU's only experienced signal caller after former starter Brandon Harris transferred to North Carolina. Etling threw for 2,123 yards with 11 touchdowns and five interceptions last season. The offense will still depend heavily on a quality running game. Despite losing Leonard Fournette, the Tigers have plenty of power in reserve with the return of junior Derrius Guice. He rushed for 1,387 yards and 15 TDs as Fournette battled an ankle injury last season and has positioned himself as a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate.

The Tigers are retooling at wide receiver with the loss of their top two pass catchers, Malachi Dupre and Travin Dural, to the NFL. Canada talked senior D.J. Chark into returning, and he's now poised to be Etling's top target.

On the offensive line, K.J. Malone (son of basketball Hall of Famer Karl Malone) flirted with moving on to his dream job of being a U.S. Marshal protecting national monuments, but he will return to protect Etling's blind side at left tackle instead.

DEFENSE The good news: Christian LaCouture was talked into returning for his fifth season after missing all of 2016 with a knee injury. He'll move from tackle to end in LSU's 3-4 front. The bad news: There was at least some concern about the future of junior Buck (a hybrid of defensive end and outside linebacker) Arden Key. The SEC's leader with 1.1 sacks per game, Key sat out spring practice for what LSU termed personal reasons. Key is expected to return in the fall, but it isn't a guarantee.

The linebacker corps is the Tigers' biggest rebuilding job after losing inside linebackers Duke Riley and Kendell Beckwith, who led LSU with 93 and 91 tackles, respectively. Senior Donnie Alexander, LSU's No. 2 returning tackler with 45 stops plus an interception, takes over one inside spot. The other will be manned by sophomore Devin White, a promising talent.

In the secondary, junior Donte Jackson (two interceptions) takes over the shutdown corner role from Tre'Davious White. John Battle is a returning starter at safety, but look for true freshman JaCoby Stevens to push for playing time after arriving in January.

SPECIALISTS The Tigers will break in a new placekicker, redshirt freshman Connor Culp. Josh Growden, LSU's third straight Australian punter, returns after averaging 41.4 yards per kick. Orgeron promises a more aggressive approach to returning and blocking kicks under special teams analyst Greg McMahon, formerly of the New Orleans Saints, who will "coach" five position coaches who will handle a variety of special teams tasks.

FINAL ANALYSIS Orgeron retained defensive coordinator Dave Aranda (now the highest-paid college assistant coach at $1.8 million per year) and hired Canada to break LSU out of its predictable offensive patterns. Talent always abounds at LSU, although there's still work to do to catch up with Alabama in the trenches. A tough schedule awaits — the Tigers have only three SEC home games — so a 10–2 record would probably be the ceiling, which is not a bad goal in the Tigers' first full year under Coach O.



DERRIUS GUICE

"Even though Leonard Fournette got all the attention, I thought Derrius Guice was just as good of a back and was probably harder to scheme against."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	7	D.J. Chark (Sr.)	10 Stephen Sullivan (So.)
WR	25	Drake Davis (So.)	11 Dee Anderson (So.)
LT	63	**K.J. Malone (Sr.)**	76 Austin Deculus (Fr.)
LG	78	Garrett Brumfield (Jr.)	71 Donavaughn Campbell (So.)
C	64	**Will Clapp (Jr.)**	79 Lloyd Cushenberry (Fr.)
RG	75	**Maea Teuhema (Jr.)**	71 Donavaughn Campbell (So.)
RT	66	Toby Weathersby (Jr.)	65 Jakori Savage (Fr.)
TE	84	Foster Moreau (Jr.)	85 Caleb Roddy (So.)
QB	16	**Danny Etling (Sr.)**	12 Justin McMillan (So.)
FB	44	J.D. Moore (Sr.)	47 Bry'Kiethon Mouton (Jr.)
RB	5	**Derrius Guice (Jr.)**	28 Darrel Williams (Sr.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	18	Christian LaCouture (Sr.)	90 Rashard Lawrence (So.)
NT	99	**Greg Gilmore (Sr.)**	95 Ed Alexander (So.)
DE	97	Frank Herron (Sr.)	98 Deondre Clark (Sr.)
BUCK	49	**Arden Key (Jr.)**	46 Andre Anthony (Fr.)
ILB	40	Devin White (So.)	45 Michael Divinity (So.)
ILB	48	Donnie Alexander (Sr.)	45 Michael Divinity (So.)
OLB	23	Corey Thompson (Sr.)	35 Devin Voorhies (Sr.)
CB	1	**Donte Jackson (Jr.)**	29 Andraez Williams (Fr.)
CB	2	Kevin Toliver (Jr.)	8 Saivion Smith (So.)
S	26	**John Battle (Sr.)**	30 Eric Monroe (Fr.)
S	21	Ed Paris (Sr.)	3 JaCoby Stevens (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	34	Connor Culp (Fr.)	KR	1	Donte Jackson (Jr.)
P	38	Josh Growden (So.)	PR	1	Donte Jackson (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Danny Etling, 269-160-2,123-5, 11 TDs
Rushing: Derrius Guice, 183 att., 1,387 yds., 15 TDs
Receiving: D.J. Chark, 26 rec., 466 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Arden Key, 56
Sacks: Arden Key, 12.0
Interceptions: Donte Jackson, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Ed Orgeron
Record at School: 6-2 (1 year)
Career Record: 22-29 (3+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Matt Canada
Defensive Coordinator: Dave Aranda
Baton Rouge, LA • Tiger Stadium (102,321)

Joe Robbins /Getty Images

OLE MISS REBELS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **46** • SEC WEST PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 1-7 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	South Alabama
Sept.	9	Tennessee-Martin
Sept.	16	at California
Sept.	30	at Alabama
Oct.	7	at Auburn
Oct.	14	Vanderbilt
Oct.	21	LSU
Oct.	28	Arkansas
Nov.	4	at Kentucky
Nov.	11	UL Lafayette
Nov.	18	Texas A&M
Nov.	23	at Mississippi State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 2-6 SEC

Sept.	5	vs. Florida State #	L	34-45
Sept.	10	Wofford	W	38-13
Sept.	17	Alabama	L	43-48
Sept.	24	Georgia	W	45-14
Oct.	1	Memphis	W	48-28
Oct.	15	at Arkansas	L	30-34
Oct.	22	at LSU	L	21-38
Oct.	29	Auburn	L	29-40
Nov.	5	Georgia Southern	W	37-27
Nov.	12	at Texas A&M	W	29-28
Nov.	19	at Vanderbilt	L	17-38
Nov.	26	Mississippi State	L	20-55

#Orlando

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. D.D. Bowie, DB, Morton, MS
2. Chester Graves, LB, Kansas City, MO
3. Breon Dixon, LB, Loganville, GA
4. Mohamed Sanogo, LB, Plano, TX
5. Tony Gray, OL, Loganville, GA
6. Kam'ron White, DB, Clinton, MS
7. Braylon Sanders, WR, Hogansville, GA
8. Markel Winters, DL, Tallahassee, FL*
9. Josh Clarke, LB, Jefferson, LA
10. A.J. Harris, DB, Madison, AL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.6 ppg	4	42
Rushing	149.4 ypg	12	95
Passing	314.9 ypg	1	13
Total	464.3 ypg	3	26
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	34.0 ppg	14	100
Rushing	246.3 ypg	14	120
Passing	214.9 ypg	7	48
Total	461.3 ypg	13	111
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.25	11	85

STAT CORNER

300

Ole Miss allowed at least 300 yards rushing in four of its eight SEC games, including a staggering 457 yards in a season-ending loss to Mississippi State.

OFFENSE Shea Patterson, the No. 1 quarterback in the 2016 recruiting class, lost his redshirt and became the starter after Chad Kelly tore an ACL with three games remaining. He led the Rebels to a win at Texas A&M in his debut before lopsided losses at Vanderbilt and at home to Mississippi State. Patterson's completion percentage was only 54.8 due in part to an inordinate amount of dropped passes.

Patterson has a plethora of targets with big, physical sophomores A.J. Brown and D.K. Metcalf the most intriguing. He will not have tight end Evan Engram, who had 65 catches and eight touchdowns while narrowly missing 1,000 yards last season.

The offensive line returns four starters and showed increased physical play in the spring. Depth is inexperienced but promising. Sophomore left tackle Greg Little, a five-star recruit, could blossom.

The running game has interesting potential under new coordinator Phil Longo, whose offenses at Sam Houston posted gaudy numbers in recent years. Jordan Wilkins and Eric Swinney both missed the entire 2016 season. Swinney was rated among the top-15 running backs in the 2015 recruiting class.

DEFENSE Ole Miss struggled across the board defensively in 2016, ranking 100th or worse in total defense, scoring defense, rushing defense and red-zone defense. Wesley McGriff, who was on Freeze's first staff in 2012 as the defensive backs coach, is the new defensive coordinator. He has installed a base 4-3 defense.

The defensive line has the potential to be outstanding. End Marquis Haynes, who flirted with the NFL Draft, is third on the school's career sack list with 24.5. If junior tackle Breeland Speaks bounces back from a disappointing season, the run defense should be much improved.

The key could be the play of the linebackers, which was a position in flux a year ago. There's no can't-miss prospect arriving on campus, but there are lots of bodies and a measure of experience in rangy senior DeMarquis Gates.

Sophomore Myles Hartsfield made an impressive move from strong safety to corner in the spring. He will team with senior Ken Webster, who is returning from a torn ACL, to form a solid cornerback tandem.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Gary Wunderlich is back for his senior season after earning third-team All-America honors from the Associated Press. The Lou Groza Award semifinalist connected on 22-of-23 field goal attempts and led the nation with a 95.7 percent success rate. Wunderlich split time at punter with Will Gleeson, who also returns

FINAL ANALYSIS If the opportunity to play in a bowl game is the only motivation, the 2017 season is already lost. Ole Miss players insist it is not. They found out in late February they have no chance at bowl game, not because of what may or may not happen on the field, but because of the school's own ban, part of its self-sanctioning amid an NCAA investigation that approaches its fifth birthday.

"We were devastated, but the next morning we had a 6 o'clock workout, and everybody showed up with high energy," junior offensive lineman Javon Patterson says. "That showed a lot about our team."

Spring practice also showed that Ole Miss — with two new coordinators and three new position coaches under Hugh Freeze — is still pretty good on offense. And that question marks remain on defense.

The Rebels want to make amends for a disappointing season that saw them ranked as high as No. 11 before falling to 5–7. Twelve regular-season games, to them, is far more important than one postseason exhibition. "We've moved way beyond that," Haynes says. "There are no frowns, none of that. We're all here as a family, and we're going to keep moving forward."



SHEA PATTERSON

"They're just hard to evaluate because of all the stuff they've got going on with the NCAA. ... We'll see how they hold up with this storm brewing."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	1	A.J. Brown (So.)	81	Trey Bledsoe (Sr.)
SLOT	12	**Van Jefferson (So.)**	11	Markell Pack (Sr.)
WR	14	D.K. Metcalf (So.)	5	DaMarkus Lodge (Jr.)
LT	74	Greg Little (So.)	73	**Rod Taylor (Sr.)**
LG	79	**Javon Patterson (Jr.)**	54	Jack DeFoor (Fr.)
C	50	**Sean Rawlings (Jr.)**	61	Eli Johnson (Fr.)
RG	70	**Jordan Sims (Jr.)**	76	Daronte Bouldin (Sr.)
RT	67	Alex Givens (So.)	72	Royce Newman (Fr.)
TE	15	Octavious Cooley (So.)	7	Jason Pellerin (So.)
QB	20	Shea Patterson (So.)	10	Jordan Ta'amu (Jr.)
RB	22	Jordan Wilkins (Sr.)	24	Eric Swinney (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	10	**Marquis Haynes (Sr.)**	97	Qaadir Sheppard (So.)
DT	95	Benito Jones (So.)	90	Ross Donelly (Jr.)
DT	9	**Breeland Speaks (Jr.)**	52	Austrian Robinson (So.)
DE	14	Victor Evans (Jr.)	98	Charles Wiley (Fr.)
OLB	30	A.J. Moore (Sr.)	23	Breon Dixon (Fr.)
MLB	43	Detric Bing-Dukes (Jr.)	35	Donta Evans (Fr.)
OLB	3	**DeMarquis Gates (Sr.)**	41	Brenden Williams (So.)
CB	15	**Myles Hartsfield (So.)**	7	**Jalen Julius (So.)**
CB	5	Ken Webster (Sr.)	31	Jaylon Jones (So.)
FS	36	**Zedrick Woods (Jr.)**	4	C.J. Hampton (Sr.)
SS	2	Deontay Anderson (So.)	26	C.J. Moore (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	97	Gary Wunderlich (Sr.)	KR	22	Jordan Wilkins (Sr.)
P	94	Will Gleeson (Sr.)	PR	12	Van Jefferson (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Shea Patterson, 132-72-880-3, 6 TDs
Rushing: Eugene Brazley, 61 att., 261 yds.; 2 TDs
Receiving: Van Jefferson, 49 rec. 543 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: DeMarquis Gates, 79
Sacks: Marquis Haynes, 7.0
Interceptions: Zedrick Woods, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Hugh Freeze
Record at School: 39-25 (5 years)
Career Record: 69-31 (8 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Phil Longo, Matt Luke
Defensive Coordinators: Jason Jones, Wesley McGriff
Oxford, MS • Vaught-Hemingway Stadium (64,038)

Joshua McCoy/Ole Miss Athletics

MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **30** • SEC WEST PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 3-5 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Charleston Southern
Sept. 9	at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 16	LSU
Sept. 23	at Georgia
Sept. 30	at Auburn
Oct. 14	BYU
Oct. 21	Kentucky
Oct. 28	at Texas A&M
Nov. 4	Massachusetts
Nov. 11	Alabama
Nov. 18	at Arkansas
Nov. 23	Ole Miss

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 3-5 SEC

Sept. 3	South Alabama	L	20-21
Sept. 10	South Carolina	W	27-14
Sept. 17	at LSU	L	20-23
Sept. 24	vs. Massachusetts #	W	47-35
Oct. 8	Auburn	L	14-38
Oct. 15	at BYU (ot)	L	21-28
Oct. 22	at Kentucky	L	38-40
Oct. 29	Samford	W	56-41
Nov. 5	Texas A&M	W	35-28
Nov. 12	at Alabama	L	3-51
Nov. 19	Arkansas	L	42-58
Nov. 26	at Ole Miss	W	55-20
Dec. 26	vs. Miami (Ohio) %	W	17-16

#Foxboro %St. Petersburg Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Willie Gay, LB, Starkville, MS
2. Keytaon Thompson, QB, New Orleans, LA
3. Kylin Hill, RB, Columbus, MS
4. Chauncey Rivers, DL, Stone Mountain, GA*
5. Johnathan Abram, DB, Columbia, MS*
6. Noah Elliss, DL, Denver, CO
7. Tyler Dunning, LB, Fort Lauderdale, FL
8. Deion Pope, DL, Collins, MS*
9. Lee Autry, DL, Albemarle, NC*
10. Tommy Champion, OL, Jackson, MS*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.4 ppg	7	56
Rushing	230.5 ypg	5	23
Passing	209.7 ypg	9	89
Total	440.2 ypg	7	44
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.8 ppg	13	93
Rushing	177.5 ypg	7	70
Passing	281.5 ypg	14	120
Total	459.1 ypg	12	110
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+7	+0.54	3	24

STAT CORNER

+11.5

Based on fumble recovery and interception rates, MSU's expected turnover margin was minus-4.5. Actual turnover margin: plus-7.

OFFENSE Mississippi State had its fair share of offensive struggles without Dak Prescott, as would be expected, but by the end of the season coach Dan Mullen had figured out how to get this group rolling. It starts at quarterback, where Nick Fitzgerald is a developing passer — he threw for 300-plus yards several times, but his 54.3 percent completion rate left something to be desired — and an excellent runner who topped 100 yards rushing eight times. Fitzgerald and running back Aeris Williams combined in the last month to form a powerful running combo in the team's run-pass option packages. Expect more of the same this fall.

Donald Gray is the team's most experienced receiver, but he'll have to prove he's a legit No. 1 threat. Keith Mixon isn't, but he's an electrifying option out of the slot. And Fitzgerald could lean on the tight ends; Farrod Green and Justin Johnson were both good receivers when called upon in the past and could take on larger roles in 2017.

The offensive line has probably been Mississippi State's biggest weakness the last two seasons, especially at containing edge pressure. Three starters are gone, two of them on the interior. Position coach John Hevesy may be moving bodies around in preseason camp to find the right combination.

DEFENSE It's yet another coordinator change for Mississippi State; former Louisville and Georgia defensive coordinator Todd Grantham is the fourth DC in as many seasons in Starkville. Grantham will use multiple fronts and plans on blitzing more and being an "attacking defense."

He has some weapons to do that, if he wants. Defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons, a former five-star recruit, and linebacker Leo Lewis are both emerging stars in the SEC, and there are several end/outside linebacker types on the roster who can get after the quarterback. But Montez Sweat, Chauncey Rivers and the other three junior college transfers at the position are all going to be making the transition to the SEC in real time, which is always scary and usually bumpy.

The Bulldogs need a bounce-back season from Brandon Bryant at safety, and converted linebacker J.T. Gray joins him on the back end of the defense. Former Georgia Bulldog Johnathan Abram is the best known of three junior college signees at the position. Tolando Cleveland is back after missing all of 2016 with a torn ACL, and if he's healthy (and he needs to be), he's probably the team's best cornerback.

SPECIALISTS Logan Cooke is back as the team's punter, so the source of intrigue on special teams is at placekicker, where Westin Graves' back surgery forced him to give up football. Jace Christmann was Graves' backup a year ago, but he never kicked in a game. Cooke has kicked off, so he could do it. So could Brad Wall or incoming freshman Tucker Day.

FINAL ANALYSIS Mississippi State can still hang its hat on rising to No. 1 in the polls during the 2014 season, but the program slipped to 5–7 in the regular season in 2016 and made a bowl game only because of its high APR score. But that was a rebuilding year, and everyone knew it going in. With the quarterback position now settled and some emerging stars on defense, Mississippi State could be back in line to begin another ascent up the SEC West standings — if not to the top, at least into the middle of the pack with a seven- or eight-win season.

But there are question marks, especially along the offensive line, so it would not be surprising to see Mississippi State need its good grades to get it into another bowl game.



NICK FITZGERALD

"You talk about good coaches – I know Dan Mullen rubs some people the wrong way, but those guys can flat out get the job done."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	6	**Donald Gray (Sr.)**	86	Jesse Jackson (Jr.)
WR	17	Jamal Couch (So.)	20	Reggie Todd (Fr.)
WR	23	Keith Mixon (So.)	**22**	**Malik Dear (Jr.)**
TE	82	**Farrod Green (So.)**	81	Justin Johnson (Jr.)
LT	54	Greg Eiland (Fr.)	68	Tyre Phillips (Jr.)
LG	74	Elgton Jenkins (Jr.)	56	Dareuan Parker (Fr.)
C	55	**Martinas Rankin (Sr.)**	75	Harrison Moon (So.)
RG	61	**Deion Calhoun (Jr.)**	58	Tommy Champion (Jr.)
RT	51	Stewart Reese (Fr.)		Cordavien Suggs (Fr.)
QB	7	**Nick Fitzgerald (Jr.)**	10	Keytaon Thompson (Fr.)
RB	27	Aeris Williams (Jr.)	21	Nick Gibson (So.)

DEFENSE (4)

DE	98	Jeffery Simmons (So.)	52	Kobe Jones (Fr.)
NT	95	Braxton Hoyett (Jr.)	88	Deion Pope (Jr.)
DE	34	Cory Thomas (Jr.)	43	Fletcher Adams (So.)
OLB	94	Montez Sweat (Jr.)		Willie Gay (Fr.)
ILB	44	**Leo Lewis (So.)**	3	Traver Jung (Sr.)
ILB	46	Dez Harris (Sr.)	40	Erroll Thompson (Fr.)
OLB	4	Gerri Green (Jr.)	42	Marquiss Spencer (So.)
CB	7	Tolando Cleveland (Sr.)	**25**	**Lashad Durr (Sr.)**
CB	2	Jamal Peters (Jr.)	13	Cam Dantzler (Fr.)
S	1	**Brandon Bryant (Jr.)**	38	Johnathan Abram (Jr.)
S	41	Mark McLaurin (Jr.)	**12**	**J.T. Gray (Sr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K		Tucker Day (Fr.)	KR	23 Keith Mixon (So.)
P	43	Logan Cooke (Sr.)	PR	6 Donald Gray (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Nick Fitzgerald, 361-196-2,423-10, 21 TDs
Rushing: Nick Fitzgerald, 195 att., 1,375 yds., 16 TDs
Receiving: Donald Gray, 41 rec., 709 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Leo Lewis, 79
Sacks: Traver Jung, 2.5
Interceptions: Jamoral Graham, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Dan Mullen
Record at School: 61-42 (8 years)
Career Record: 61-42 (8 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Billy Gonzales, John Hevesy
Defensive Coordinator: Todd Grantham
Starkville, MS • Davis Wade Stadium at Scott Field

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **37** • SEC WEST PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7–5, 3–5 SEC**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at UCLA	
Sept. 9	Nicholls State	
Sept. 16	UL Lafayette	
Sept. 23	vs. Arkansas #	
Sept. 30	South Carolina	
Oct. 7	Alabama	
Oct. 14	at Florida	
Oct. 28	Mississippi State	
Nov. 4	Auburn	
Nov. 11	New Mexico	
Nov. 18	at Ole Miss	
Nov. 25	at LSU	

#Arlington, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 3	UCLA	(ot)	W	31-24
Sept. 10	Prairie View		W	67-0
Sept. 17	at Auburn		W	29-16
Sept. 24	vs. Arkansas #		W	45-24
Oct. 1	at South Carolina		W	24-13
Oct. 8	Tennessee	(ot)	W	45-38
Oct. 22	at Alabama		L	14-33
Oct. 29	New Mexico State		W	52-10
Nov. 5	at Mississippi State		L	28-35
Nov. 12	Ole Miss		L	28-29
Nov. 19	UTSA		W	23-10
Nov. 24	LSU		L	39-54
Dec. 28	vs. Kansas State %		L	28-33

#Arlington %Texas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Anthony Hines III, LB, Plano, TX
2. Jhamon Ausbon, WR, Houston, TX
3. Kellen Mond, QB, San Antonio, TX
4. Derrick Tucker, S, Manvel, TX
5. Hezekiah Jones, WR, Stafford, TX
6. Grayson Reed, OL, Cypress, TX
7. Myles Jones, CB, Magnolia, TX
8. Santino Marchiol, LB, Centennial, CO
9. Keldrick Carper, ATH, Plain Dealing, LA
10. Devodrick Johnson, LB, Dallas, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.8 ppg	3	34
Rushing	211.8 ypg	6	34
Passing	255.2 ypg	4	46
Total	467.0 ypg	2	24
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.5 ppg	7	40
Rushing	191.8 ypg	8	80
Passing	250.0 ypg	13	91
Total	441.8 ypg	10	90
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	6	42

STAT CORNER

+1.3

A&M converted its opportunities. The Aggies averaged 5.0 points per trip inside the 40 and allowed 3.7. That plus-1.3 margin ranked fourth in FBS.

OFFENSE Junior receiver Christian Kirk and sophomore running back Trayveon Williams are big-time playmakers. Kirk has accumulated nearly 2,000 receiving yards in two seasons, while Williams rushed for 1,057 yards as a freshman. The Aggies are facing major questions almost everywhere else, though. Again, they will start the season with a new starting quarterback. Whether that's senior Jake Hubenak, the backup to Trevor Knight a year ago, redshirt freshman Nick Starkel or highly acclaimed true freshman prospect Kellen Mond likely won't be determined until late August.

Kirk has caught 163 passes in his brief career, but the other receivers on the roster combined for just eight receptions a year ago. However, there is great optimism surrounding freshmen Quartney Davis, Jhamon Ausbon and Hezekiah Jones and sophomore Kirk Merritt, a speedy transfer from Oregon.

Interior linemen Connor Lanfear, Colton Prater and Erik McCoy anchor an offensive line that enabled A&M to average 211.8 rushing yards per game and allowed just 21 sacks in 2016. New starters are needed at tackle. Promising junior Koda Martin is expected to step in at left tackle, where the Aggies have excelled the last five years.

DEFENSE The departure of All-America defensive end Myles Garrett is certainly a major reason for concern. No doubt, his absence significantly weakens the pass rush.

However, the Aggies' primary worry continues to be its porous run defense and lackluster linebacker play. Fingers are crossed both will be much improved. That could happen if they get better in the middle. Junior Otaro Alaka may get the call there, although he's performed better on the weak side. Sophomore Tyrel Dodson is another possibility to fill that void. Heralded true freshman Anthony Hines could also make an immediate impact.

A&M projects to be very good in the interior line. Defensive tackle Kingsley Keke looks to take the step from effective starter to genuine star. Senior Zaycoven Henderson is also coming off his best year. The ends are much more uncertain with Qualen Cunningham and Jarrett Johnson, who have been moderately productive in backup roles. Junior college transfer Micheal Clemons also was brought in to boost the pass rush.

Safety Armani Watts will contend for All-SEC recognition, but much better play is needed from the cornerbacks.

SPECIALISTS As his All-America credentials suggest, Kirk is among the elite in the country at returning punts. He just needs more chances. In 26 career games, he's returned only 27 punts, yet he's averaged 23.0 yards per return and has scored five touchdowns. Punter Shane Tripucka is almost as good but needs to be more consistent. Last season he averaged 42.9 yards per attempt with 27 kicks downed inside the 20-yard line. More consistency is also needed from kicker Daniel LaCamera. He converted 17-of-24 field goal attempts, but four misses came inside 40 yards. A reliable kickoff returner is needed.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Aggies are trying to end a trend of three consecutive 8–5 seasons that have featured late-season collapses. Also, they haven't finished higher than fourth in the SEC West since 2012. Inexperience at quarterback, issues in run defense and dependency on unproven players render the season outlook quite suspect. The schedule won't do them many favors, either, with road trips to UCLA, Florida, LSU and Ole Miss, where they typically struggle.

Coach Kevin Sumlin's job could be in jeopardy if the Aggies cannot break out of their 8–5 rut. Ironically one of Sumlin's best coaching efforts may be required this season for A&M to post eight victories.



TRAYVEON WILLIAMS

"Last time we played down there was the first time I'd been in that stadium, and I didn't feel like it was hard to play there for our guys at all."
– An opposing SEC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	3	**Christian Kirk (Jr.)**	33	Kirk Merritt (So.)	
WR	2	Jhamon Ausbon (Fr.)	80	Clyde Chriss (Fr.)	
WR	4	Damion Ratley (Sr.)	1	Quartney Davis (Fr.)	
TE	89	Kalvin Cline (Sr.)	15	Aaron Hansford (So.)	
LT	75	Koda Martin (Jr.)	74	Kellen Diesch (Fr.)	
LG	64	**Erik McCoy (So.)**	73	Jared Hocker (Fr.)	
C	76	**Colton Prater (So.)**	55	Austin Anderson (So.)	
RG	70	**Connor Lanfear (Jr.)**	77	Ryan McCollum (Fr.)	
RT	78	Keaton Sutherland (Jr.)		Christian Daimler (Sr.)	
QB	10	Jake Hubenak (Sr.)	17	Nick Starkel (Fr.)	
RB	5	Trayveon Williams (So.)	7	**Keith Ford (Sr.)**	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	40	Jarrett Johnson (Sr.)		Micheal Clemons (So.)
DT	88	**Kingsley Keke (Jr.)**	52	Justin Madubuike (Fr.)
DT	92	**Zaycoven Henderson (Sr.)**	5	Daylon Mack (Jr.)
DE	9	Qualen Cunningham (Sr.)	46	Landis Durham (Jr.)
OLB	42	**Otaro Alaka (Jr.)**	7	Richard Moore (Jr.)
MLB	25	Tyrel Dodson (So.)	42	Otaro Alaka (Jr.)
OLB	19	Anthony Hines (Fr.)	16	Dwaine Thomas (So.)
CB	24	**Priest Willis (Sr.)**	26	D. Capers-Smith (Jr.)
CB	21	Charles Oliver (So.)	27	Roney Elam (So.)
SS	6	**Donovan Wilson (Sr.)**	11	Larry Pryor (So.)
FS	23	**Armani Watts (Sr.)**	22	Clifford Chattman (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	36	Daniel LaCamera (Jr.)	KR	5	Trayveon Williams (So.)
P	46	Shane Tripucka (Sr.)	PR	3	Christian Kirk (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jake Hubenak, 104-61-884-2, 6 TDs
Rushing: Trayveon Williams, 156 att., 1,057 yds., 8 TDs
Receiving: Christian Kirk, 83 rec., 928 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Otaro Alaka, 74
Sacks: Jarrett Johnson, 4.5
Interceptions: Armani Watts, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Kevin Sumlin
Record at School: 44-21 (5 years)
Career Record: 79-38 (9 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Noel Mazzone
Defensive Coordinator: John Chavis
College Station, TX • Kyle Field (102,733)

Chris Covatta

SUN BELT PREVIEW



JALIN MOORE

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1. APPALACHIAN STATE MOUNTAINEERS 9-3, 7-1
2. TROY TROJANS 9-3, 7-1
3. ARKANSAS STATE RED WOLVES 7-5, 6-2
4. SOUTH ALABAMA JAGUARS 6-6, 5-3
5. IDAHO VANDALS 6-6, 4-4
6. LOUISIANA RAGIN' CAJUNS 5-7, 4-4
7. GEORGIA SOUTHERN EAGLES 5-7, 4-4
8. ULM WARHAWKS 4-8, 4-4
9. GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS 3-9, 2-6
10. COASTAL CAROLINA CHANTICLEERS 4-8, 2-6
11. NEW MEXICO STATE AGGIES 3-9, 2-6
12. TEXAS STATE BOBCATS 2-10, 1-7

2016 BOWL RESULTS

Camellia Bowl: Appalachian State 31, Toledo 28
Dollar General Bowl: Troy 28, Ohio 23
New Orleans Bowl: Southern Miss 28, Louisiana 21
Cure Bowl: Arkansas State 31, UCF 13
Famous Idaho Potato Bowl: Idaho 61, Colorado State 50
Arizona Bowl: Air Force 45, South Alabama 21

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

Dollar General Bowl: Appalachian State vs. Miami (Ohio)
New Orleans Bowl: Troy vs. Louisiana Tech
Camellia Bowl: Arkansas State vs. Northern Illinois
Cure Bowl: South Alabama vs. SMU
Arizona Bowl: Idaho vs. Wyoming

Moore: AP; Rose: Bob Levey/Getty Images

2016 SUN BELT STANDINGS

	SUN BELT	OVERALL
APPALACHIAN STATE	7-1	10-3
ARKANSAS STATE	7-1	8-5
TROY	6-2	10-3
IDAHO	6-2	9-4
LOUISIANA	5-3	6-7
GEORGIA SOUTHERN	4-4	5-7
ULM	3-5	4-8
SOUTH ALABAMA	2-6	6-7
GEORGIA STATE	2-6	3-9
NEW MEXICO STATE	2-6	3-9
TEXAS STATE	0-8	2-10

RECRUITING BY SCHOOL

1. Texas State
2. Troy
3. ULM
4. Georgia State
5. Georgia Southern
6. Appalachian State
7. Arkansas State
8. Louisiana
9. South Alabama
10. Coastal Carolina
11. New Mexico State
12. Idaho

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
APPALACHIAN STATE	3	2	8	1	4	1	1
ARKANSAS STATE	4	4	2	10	1	4	5
COASTAL CAROLINA	12	10	12	12	10	11	12
GEORGIA STATE	7	11	3	5	6	6	3
GEORGIA SOUTHERN	11	7	11	3	7	10	6
IDAHO	2	5	7	9	8	2	8
LOUISIANA	10	9	6	2	3	12	7
NEW MEXICO STATE	9	3	4	7	11	7	10
SOUTH ALABAMA	8	6	10	4	2	5	4
TEXAS STATE	6	12	9	11	12	3	11
TROY	1	1	1	8	5	9	2
ULM	5	8	5	6	9	8	9



LARRY ROSE III

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Brandon Silvers	6-3	214	Sr.	Troy
RB	Jalin Moore	5-11	205	Jr.	Appalachian State
RB	Larry Rose III	5-11	190	Sr.	New Mexico State
AP	Jordan Chunn	6-1	240	Sr.	Troy
WR	Penny Hart	5-8	180	So.	Georgia State
WR	Emanuel Thompson	6-1	197	Sr.	Troy
TE	Blake Mack	6-3	245	Sr.	Arkansas State
C	Aaron Brewer	6-3	270	So.	Texas State
OL	Colby Gossett	6-6	315	Sr.	Appalachian State
OL	Victor Johnson	6-5	290	So.	Appalachian State
OL	Beau Nunn	6-4	300	Sr.	Appalachian State
OL	Jordan Rose	6-6	325	Sr.	Idaho

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Aikeem Coleman	6-3	275	Sr.	Idaho
DL	Joe Dillon	6-3	215	So.	Louisiana
DL	Ja'Von Rolland-Jones	6-2	244	Sr.	Arkansas State
DL	Tee Sims	6-3	260	Sr.	Appalachian State
LB	Eric Boggs	6-3	235	Sr.	Appalachian State
LB	Bryan London II	6-2	232	So.	Texas State
LB	Kyle Wilson	6-0	228	Sr.	Arkansas State
CB	Clifton Duck	5-10	175	So.	Appalachian State
CB	Latrell Gibbs	5-10	170	Jr.	Appalachian State
S	Justin Clifton	6-0	206	Jr.	Arkansas State
S	Jeremy Reaves	5-11	190	Jr.	South Alabama

FIRST-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Stevie Artigue	5-10	185	Jr.	Louisiana
P	Payton Theisler	5-8	160	So.	New Mexico State
KR	Jabir Frye	5-7	165	So.	Troy
PR	Blaise Taylor	5-9	165	Sr.	Arkansas State

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	Matt Linehan	6-3	239	Sr.	Idaho
RB	Xavier Johnson	5-11	185	Jr.	South Alabama
RB	Warren Wand	5-5	179	Jr.	Arkansas State
AP	Isaiah Saunders	5-10	225	Jr.	Idaho
WR	Deondre Douglas	6-1	206	Jr.	Troy
WR	Shaedon Meadors	6-2	185	Sr.	Appalachian State
TE	Maaseiah Francis	6-3	205	So.	South Alabama
C	Gabe Mobley	6-2	280	Jr.	Georgia State
OL	Kevin Dotson	6-4	309	So.	Louisiana
OL	Noah Fisher	6-4	305	So.	South Alabama
OL	Steven Rowzee	6-3	311	Sr.	Troy
OL	Frank Sutton Jr.	6-3	302	Sr.	ULM

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	Tre Alford	5-10	280	Jr.	South Alabama
DL	Mackendy Cheridor	6-5	275	Sr.	Georgia State
DL	Dee Liner	6-3	325	Sr.	Arkansas State
DL	Baron Poole II	6-2	275	Sr.	Troy
LB	Kaden Elliss	6-3	222	Jr.	Idaho
LB	Terrill Hanks	6-3	230	Jr.	New Mexico State
LB	Michael Shaw	6-4	230	Jr.	Georgia State
CB	Kamryn Melton	5-10	187	Sr.	Troy
CB	Chandon Sullivan	5-11	195	Sr.	Georgia State
S	A.J. Howard	5-11	200	Sr.	Appalachian State
S	Jaden Wright	6-0	215	Sr.	New Mexico State

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	Michael Rubino	6-3	210	So.	Appalachian State
P	Brandon Wright	5-10	180	So.	Georgia State
KR	Daryl Rollins-Davis	5-9	1632	Jr.	Arkansas State
PR	Chris Jones	5-11	170	Sr.	Coastal Carolina

APPALACHIAN STATE MOUNTAINEERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **67** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **1** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-3, 7-1 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Georgia
Sept.	9	Savannah State
Sept.	16	at Texas State
Sept.	23	Wake Forest
Oct.	7	New Mexico State
Oct.	14	at Idaho
Oct.	21	Coastal Carolina
Oct.	28	at Massachusetts
Nov.	4	at UL Monroe
Nov.	9	Georgia Southern
Nov.	25	at Georgia State
Dec.	2	UL Lafayette

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 7-1 SUN BELT

Sept.	1	at Tennessee	(ot) L	13-20
Sept.	10	Old Dominion	W	31-7
Sept.	17	Miami	L	10-45
Sept.	24	at Akron	W	45-38
Oct.	1	Georgia State	W	17-3
Oct.	12	at Louisiana	W	24-0
Oct.	22	Idaho	W	37-19
Oct.	27	at Georgia Southern	W	34-10
Nov.	5	Texas State	W	35-10
Nov.	12	at Troy	L	24-28
Nov.	19	ULM	W	42-17
Nov.	26	at New Mexico State	W	37-7
Dec.	17	vs. Toledo #	W	31-28

#Camellia Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Malik Williams, WR, Chester, SC
2. Thomas Hennigan, WR, Greensboro, NC
3. D'Andre Hicks, DB, Punta Gorda, FL
4. Daetrich Harrington, RB, Douglasville, GA
5. Ryan Huff, DB, Athens, GA
6. Zeke Brandle, DL, Forest City, NC
7. Jermaine McDaniel Jr., DE, Dillon, SC
8. Joe Hartung, OL, Greenwood, SC
9. Noah Hannon, OL, Greer, SC
10. Peyton Derrick, QB, Conway, SC

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.2 ppg	3	64
Rushing	250.9 ypg	1	10
Passing	179.0 ypg	9	105
Total	429.9 ypg	1	52
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	17.8 ppg	1	9
Rushing	125.9 ypg	2	20
Passing	203.8 ypg	3	31
Total	329.7 ypg	1	17
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
+8	+0.62	3	18

STAT CORNER

2.1

Appalachian State allowed just 2.1 passes per game of 20-plus yards, third fewest in the country. Not bad for a young secondary.

OFFENSE With 27 wins as a starting quarterback, Taylor Lamb gives Appalachian State a proven weapon. The problem for Mountaineers opponents, though, is that he's far from the only one. Lamb, the son of Mercer coach Bobby Lamb, knows how to keep the Mountaineers' offense clicking, accounting for 24 total touchdowns last season. "He's seen it all as a starter," coach Scott Satterfield says. "He's very mature. … He's got all the intangibles."

Last season's Sun Belt Offensive Player of the Year Jalin Moore carried for 1,402 yards and should again be one of the league's most dangerous players. He'll have Terrence Upshaw back to help handle the rushing load after Upshaw missed last season with academic issues. Upshaw rushed for 442 yards in 2015 and had a strong spring.

The Mountaineers had the league's top rushing offense last season, and thanks to an offensive line that has experience among its starters — most notably guard Colby Gossett and tackle Beau Nunn, seniors who've started the last two seasons — it will likely have it again.

Shaedon Meadors leads this season's receiving corps after racking up 716 yards on 45 receptions.

DEFENSE Tee Sims returns at defensive end after collecting seven sacks last season. Fellow senior Caleb Fuller, who accounted for three, will likely start on the other side of the Mountaineers' 3-4 front. Junior Myquon Stout will reprise his role as the starting nose tackle and defensive anchor.

Behind him, inside linebacker Eric Boggs is poised for another outstanding season. The senior led the Mountaineers in tackles last season, and without departed program mainstays Kennan Gilchrist and John Law lining up alongside him at linebacker, he's now that unit's unquestioned leader. But there is also potential star power at outside linebacker. Devan Stringer returns after logging 71 tackles last season — good enough for third on the team — and Satterfield says that senior Rashaad Townes could be the defense's most talented player.

All four likely starters in the secondary saw significant action last season, with cornerback Clifton Duck picking off five passes and safety A.J. Howard grabbing three. Cornerback Latrell Gibbs should return after missing last season with academic issues. With seven picks in 2015, he should make an impact.

SPECIALISTS Then-freshman kicker Michael Rubino had a rough night in a close season-opening loss at Tennessee last season. But by hitting 75 percent of his field goal tries and all of his extra points after that, he's proven that the placekicking job is all his. The punting gig, meanwhile is wide open. Rylee Critcher, the younger brother of last season's starter Bentlee Critcher, and former Australian rules football player Xavier Subotsch are among the hopefuls aiming to fill that spot.

FINAL ANALYSIS It wasn't that long ago that the question surrounding Appalachian State was about how quickly the Mountaineers would adjust to life in the Sun Belt. But now, heading into their fourth season on the FBS level, the question is when the Sun Belt will catch up to them.

With wins in 20 of their last 22 league games, a conference title last season and back-to-back bowl wins, the Mountaineers have established themselves as one of the Sun Belt's alpha dogs. With so much firepower returning, don't expect that status to change anytime soon.

"We've had really good leadership the last few years, I think we're going to have the same kind of leadership again this year," Satterfield says. "… So I think we'll have a great opportunity to compete at a high level."



JALIN MOORE

"It's no secret what they're doing, but they execute well. It's still probably going to be them and Arkansas State at the top of the league."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	6	**Shaedon Meadors (Sr.)**	81	Jalen Virgil (Fr.)
WR	2	Ike Lewis (Sr.)	82	Zy Letman (Sr.)
WR	19	Darrynton Evans (So.)	13	Dante Jones (Sr.)
LT	74	**Victor Johnson (So.)**	56	Nate Haskins (Fr.)
LG	52	Tobias Edge-Campbell (Jr.)	76	Madison Malone (Jr.)
C	58	Ryan Neuzil (Fr.)	52	Tobias Edge-Campbell (Jr.)
RG	70	**Colby Gossett (Sr.)**	78	Chandler Greer (Jr.)
RT	50	**Beau Nunn (Sr.)**	55	Matt Williams (Fr.)
TE	86	Levi Duffield (Sr.)	87	Collin Reed (So.)
QB	11	**Taylor Lamb (Sr.)**	10	J.P. Caruso (Jr.)
RB	25	**Jalin Moore (Jr.)**	21	Terrence Upshaw (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	42	Tee Sims (Sr.)	90	Chris Willis (Fr.)
DT	92	**Myquon Stout (Jr.)**		E.J. Scott (So.)
DE	51	**Caleb Fuller (Sr.)**	47	Okon Godwin (Jr.)
OLB	31	Rashaad Townes (Sr.)	37	Teh'Ron Fuller (Jr.)
ILB	44	Anthony Flory (Jr.)	33	Edward Davis (So.)
ILB	45	**Eric Boggs (Sr.)**	59	Jordan Fehr (Fr.)
OLB	28	**Devan Stringer (Sr.)**	24	Akeem Davis (So.)
CB	5	Latrell Gibbs (Jr.)	17	Tae Hayes (Jr.)
CB	22	**Clifton Duck (So.)**	18	Shemar Jean-Charles (Fr.)
SS	10	**A.J. Howard (Sr.)**	9	Austin Exford (Jr.)
FS	7	Josh Thomas (Jr.)	34	Desmond Franklin (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	41	Michael Rubino (So.)	KR	19	Darrynton Evans (So.)
P	94	Rylee Critcher (Fr.)	PR	22	Clifton Duck (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Taylor Lamb, 325-197-2,281-8, 15 TDs
Rushing: Jalin Moore, 237 att., 1,402 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Shaedon Meadors, 45 rec., 716 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Eric Boggs, 98
Sacks: Antonious Sims, 7.0
Interceptions: Clifton Duck, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Scott Satterfield
Record at School: 32-18 (4 years)
Career Record: 32-18 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Shawn Clark, Frank Ponce
Defensive Coordinators: Scot Sloan, Nate Woody
Boone, NC • Kidd Brewer Stadium (24,050)

Frank Jansky/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

ARKANSAS STATE RED WOLVES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **86** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **3** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5, 6-2 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Nebraska	
Sept. 9	Miami (Fla.)	
Sept. 16	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	
Sept. 23	at SMU	
Oct. 4	at Georgia Southern	
Oct. 14	Coastal Carolina	
Oct. 19	UL Lafayette	
Oct. 28	at New Mexico State	
Nov. 11	at South Alabama	
Nov. 18	Texas State	
Nov. 25	at UL Monroe	
Dec. 2	Troy	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5, 7-1 SUN BELT

Sept. 2	Toledo	L	10-31
Sept. 10	at Auburn	L	14-51
Sept. 16	at Utah State	L	20-34
Sept. 24	Central Arkansas	L	23-28
Oct. 5	Georgia Southern	W	27-26
Oct. 15	South Alabama	W	17-7
Oct. 29	ULM	W	51-10
Nov. 3	at Georgia State	W	31-16
Nov. 12	New Mexico State	W	41-22
Nov. 17	at Troy	W	35-3
Nov. 26	at Louisiana	L	19-24
Dec. 3	at Texas State	W	36-14
Dec. 17	vs. UCF #	W	31-13

#Cure Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Dwayne Fisher, OL, Marrero, LA
2. Michael Johnson, S, Hialeah, FL*
3. Darreon Jackson, S, Derby, KS*
4. AJ Cayetano, CB, Atlanta, GA
5. Aldon Clark, QB, New Orleans, LA
6. Marvis Brown, OL, Orange, TX*
7. Jefferie Gibson, S, Hope Mills, NC*
8. Larry Wooden, S, Hoover, AL
9. Andre Harris, OL, Oklahoma City, OK
10. Nour-Eddine Seidnaly, OL, Silver Spring, MD*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.3 ppg	4	74
Rushing	137.2 ypg	9	106
Passing	242.2 ypg	6	57
Total	379.4 ypg	7	93
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	21.5 ppg	2	19
Rushing	143.4 ypg	4	34
Passing	219.5 ypg	4	51
Total	362.8 ypg	2	29
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
+5	+0.38	4	34

STAT CORNER

4.8/15.3

ASU allowed just 4.8 yards per play on first down, 10th in FBS. Efficiency led to just 15.3 points per game allowed vs. Sun Belt opponents.

OFFENSE Head coach Blake Anderson decided to coach quarterbacks and assume play-calling duties after an erratic 2016 season in which ASU's scoring average fell by 12.7 points per game. Unable to establish a rhythm in several games, the Red Wolves leaned heavily on their defense and special teams in an 8–5 season.

The Red Wolves hope to return to the fast pace Anderson prefers with former Oklahoma recruit Justice Hansen entering his second season as the starting quarterback. He was a bit inconsistent, but Hansen passed for 2,719 yards and 19 touchdowns while making key plays in ASU's drive to a Sun Belt co-championship.

Shifty Warren Wand, a 5'5" junior who rushed for 879 yards, and Johnston White, an effective complement between the tackles, form a solid running back tandem. Senior Armond Weh-Weh could give ASU a bigger backfield option if he returns from knee surgery.

While the status of senior receiver Cameron Echols-Luper is unclear after his spring suspension for off-field issues, the Red Wolves have plenty of receiving targets. Blake Mack can stretch the field at tight end. Seniors Chris Murray and Christian Booker provide speed, and ASU has size in 6'6" Justin McInnis, 6'5" Arkansas transfer Kendrick Edwards, 6'3" Omar Bayless and 6'1" Dijon Paschal.

ASU lost all five offensive line starters. The Red Wolves are rebuilding mostly with transfers, among them Jaypee Philbert (formerly of Iowa State) and Lanard Bonner. The newcomers may give ASU a more physical front, but molding a cohesive unit figures to take time.

DEFENSE The Red Wolves suffered personnel losses at every level after holding Sun Belt opponents to 15.3 points per game in 2016, but they expect another strong unit, especially in the front seven.

Senior end Ja'Von Rolland-Jones, the league's most feared pass rusher, is back after earning Sun Belt Player of the Year honors with 13.5 sacks last season. Senior tackle Dee Liner, a part-time starter last year after transferring from Alabama, will anchor the interior. The Red Wolves should have sufficient depth across the front, particularly at end.

Senior linebacker Kyle Wilson carved out a role after transferring from junior college, recording 15.5 tackles for a loss, and is expected to lead the unit. Junior Justin Clifton could start at nickel, where he spent 2016, or another safety position. Senior Blaise Taylor is steady at cornerback, but the Red Wolves are counting on junior college transfers at safety. Jefferie Gibson and Darreon Jackson, who began their careers at Clemson and Boise State, respectively, are among the newcomers.

SPECIALISTS The Red Wolves did not kick the ball especially well in 2016, but Anderson's teams have shown a knack for finding advantages on special teams under coordinator Luke Paschall. ASU blocked five kicks last season (giving the Red Wolves 11 in Anderson's three-year tenure) and scored three touchdowns on special teams, one on a blocked punt against UCF in the Cure Bowl. Taylor, ASU's career leader in punt return yardage with 781, has three career punt returns for TDs.

FINAL ANALYSIS Anderson has kept ASU at or near the top of the Sun Belt while dealing with transition issues stemming from coaching turnover before his arrival. After stumbling to an 0–4 start to the 2016 season, the Red Wolves won eight of their last nine while earning at least a share of the Sun Belt title for the fifth time in six seasons. Another slow start seems likely against a schedule that begins with Nebraska and Miami (Fla.), but ASU is capable of contending in the Sun Belt again and making a seventh straight bowl trip if the offensive line solidifies and adequate replacements are found at safety.



JUSTICE HANSEN

"They recruit a lot of junior college players, and I think that's why it takes a little time for them to jell. But they do a great job."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	84	**Dijon Paschal (Sr.)**	86	Kendrick Edwards (Jr.)	
WR	13	Christian Booker (Sr.)	8	Chauncey Mason (So.)	
WR	14	**Chris Murray (Sr.)**	7	Omar Bayless (So.)	
LT	70	Lanard Bonner (Jr.)		Nour-Eddine Seidnaly (Jr.)	
LG		Marvis Brown (Jr.)	75	Dalton Ford (So.)	
C	52	Chase Johnson (Jr.)	64	Jacob Still (Fr.)	
RG	67	Troy Elliot (So.)	68	Alex Novak (So.)	
RT		Jaypee Philbert (Sr.)	78	Jamal Fontenot (Jr.)	
TE	16	**Blake Mack (Sr.)**	88	Jonah Hill (Sr.)	
QB	15	**Justice Hansen (Jr.)**	12	Logan Bonner (Fr.)	
RB	6	**Warren Wand (Jr.)**	30	Johnston White (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	11	**Ja'Von Rolland-Jones (Sr.)**	23	Ronheen Bingham (Jr.)	
NT	99	Tony Adams (Jr.)	91	Donovan Ransom (Jr.)	
DT	25	Dee Liner (Sr.)	87	Javier Carbonell (So.)	
DE	54	Caleb Caston (Sr.)	33	Griffin Riggs (Jr.)	
LB	15	**Kyle Wilson (Sr.)**	32	Tajhea Chambers (So.)	
LB	26	Trent Ellis (So.)	51	Kirk Louis (So.)	
NB	10	**Justin Clifton (Jr.)**	9	Khari Lain (Sr.)	
CB	1	**Blaise Taylor (Sr.)**	12	Kyle Martin (Sr.)	
CB	2	Nehemiah Wagner (Sr.)	28	Brandon Byner (Sr.)	
SS		Darreon Jackson (So.)	3	B.J. Edmonds (So.)	
FS		Michael Johnson (Jr.)		Jefferie Gibson (Jr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	38	Sawyer Williams (So.)	KR	5	Daryl Rollins-Davis (Jr.)
P	99	Damon Foncham (So.)	PR	1	Blaise Taylor (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Justice Hansen, 340-197-2,719-8, 19 TDs
Rushing: Warren Wand, 200 att., 879 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Blake Mack, 34 rec., 652 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Justin Clifton, 87
Sacks: Ja'Von Rolland-Jones, 13.5
Interceptions: Blaise Taylor, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Blake Anderson
Record at School: 24-15 (3 years)
Career Record: 24-15 (3 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Buster Faulkner
Defensive Coordinator: Joe Cauthen
Jonesboro, AR • Centennial Bank Stadium (30,382)

Arkansas State Athletics

COASTAL CAROLINA CHANTICLEERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **124** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **10** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 2-6 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Massachusetts
Sept.	16	at UAB
Sept.	23	Western Illinois
Sept.	30	at UL Monroe
Oct.	7	Georgia State
Oct.	14	at Arkansas State
Oct.	21	at Appalachian State
Oct.	28	Texas State
Nov.	4	at Arkansas
Nov.	11	Troy
Nov.	18	at Idaho
Dec.	2	Georgia Southern

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-2

Sept.	3	at Lamar	W	38-14
Sept.	10	Florida A&M	W	49-10
Sept.	17	at Jacksonville St.	L	26-27
Sept.	24	Furman	W	41-21
Oct.	1	Charleston So. (2ot)	L	58-59
Oct.	15	at Gardner-Webb	W	17-7
Oct.	22	Central Conn. St.	W	33-25
Oct.	29	at Presbyterian	W	48-17
Nov.	5	Monmouth	W	38-17
Nov.	12	Bryant	W	31-21
Nov.	17	Liberty	W	42-7
Nov.	26	Hampton	W	26-7

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tay Pringle, DT, Cayce, SC
2. Jack Franklin, OL, Buford, GA
3. Seth Harrell, OL, Chesapeake, VA
4. Cantorian Weems, DB, Snellville, GA
5. Michael Makins, LB, Lithonia, GA
6. Darius Harper, QB, Knoxville, TN
7. E.J. Porter, LB, Atlantic Beach, FL
8. Jave Brown, DB, Franklin, NJ*
9. Antwine Loper, OL, Conway, SC
10. Jeffrey Gunter, DE, Durham, NC

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME
Scoring	37.2 ppg
Rushing	254.3 ypg
Passing	133.3 ypg
Total	387.7 ypg
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**
Scoring	19.3 ppg
Rushing	123.7 ypg
Passing	208.1 ypg
Total	331.8 ypg
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**
+11	+0.92

STAT CORNER

101

Coastal ranked 101st in Jeff Sagarin's Division I ratings in 2016. That would have placed the Chanticleers fifth in the Sun Belt.

OFFENSE As Coastal Carolina moves up to the FBS level after 14 seasons as an FCS member, the team is searching for stability at quarterback. Despite going 10–2 playing a full FCS schedule in 2016, the Chanticleers used six quarterbacks (seven if you count one who went down before the season) due to injury. Graduate transfer Austin Wilson may be the one-season answer. He had limited action in nine games with Syracuse from 2014-16, completing 49-of-85 passes for 418 yards with one touchdown and seven interceptions. Josh Stilley, who won the starting job as a sophomore in 2016 but was lost for the season with a knee injury in the third game, is another option.

The Chanticleers must replace the school's all-time leading rusher, De'Angelo Henderson, and four productive members of the offensive line. Senior Osharmar Abercrombie, with 1,198 career yards, is next in line to be the featured back. CCU has some talented receivers, but they are untested because the team threw little in 2016 due to the quarterback injuries. The top returner is senior Chris Jones (22 receptions for 323 yards).

Jamey Chadwell, previously the head coach at Charleston Southern, replaces Dave Patenaude as the offensive coordinator. He's expected to run a spread option attack.

DEFENSE Coastal has more stability on defense, although it must replace most of its defensive backfield and All-America linebacker Alex Scearce, who finished sixth in the voting for the Buck Buchanan FCS Defensive Player of the Year Award. The leader of the defense will be linebacker Shane Johnson, who was second on the team with 66 total tackles last season despite missing two games to injury. A lot will be expected from sophomore linebacker Laqavious Paul, who impressed in limited action as a freshman.

Pass-rushing defensive ends Myles White and Marcus Williamson return after combining for 15.5 tackles for a loss last season. The middle of the 4-3 front will be manned by tackles Ja'ree Tolbert and Dwayne Price, who combined for 47 tackles in 2016. While CCU's offensive line has the size to compete at the FBS level, the defense will be undersized with a projected starting front four that averages just over 250 pounds. This group will have to rely on quickness.

Coastal Carolina intercepted 21 passes in 2016 with a more aggressive defensive philosophy under first-year coordinator Mickey Matthews, the former head coach at James Madison. But those interceptions came with a very experienced secondary. Junior cornerback Anthony Chesley is the only returning player who had more than one of the picks.

SPECIALISTS The Chants must replace reliable placekicker Ryan Granger, who made 17-of-21 last season. Junior Masamitsu Ishibashi, who has been a kickoff specialist, is the likely replacement. Chris Jones and Ky'Jon Tyler are both dangerous in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS Coastal Carolina can compete for a Sun Belt Conference championship this season but won't be eligible for a bowl game until 2018, per NCAA transition rules. It would be unrealistic to expect the Chants to contend for a league title in their first FBS season, particularly with an undersized defense, but they have the coaching staff to succeed in the Sun Belt.

Head coach Joe Moglia, who returned to sidelines after more than two decades in the corporate world, has compiled a 51–15 record at CCU and won the 2015 Eddie Robinson FCS National Coach of the Year Award. In addition, Matthews is three-time National Coach of the Year, and Chadwell was being considered for other FBS jobs before being hired by CCU in January. This program is clearly under outstanding leadership.



OSHARMAR ABERCROMBIE

"We've seen other teams make the transition (from FCS) to the Sun Belt. They can be competitive right away."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	19	Ky'Jon Tyler (So.)		3	Gary Bradshaw (Sr.)
WR	8	**Chris Jones (Sr.)**		89	Malcolm Williams (Jr.)
LT	75	Ethan Howard (So.)		60	Steven Bedosky (Fr.)
LG	65	**Adam Lawhorn (Jr.)**		63	Trey Carter (Fr.)
C	59	**Jamarion McBride (Jr.)**		55	Rodney Mitchell (Sr.)
RG	71	Jack Flood (Jr.)		79	Christopher Jones (Fr.)
RT	72	Peter Battaglia (So.)		73	Brock Merritt (Jr.)
TE	88	Laquay Brown (Jr.)		47	Maxwell Kjosa (So.)
QB	10	Austin Wilson (Sr.)		6	Josh Stilley (Jr.)
RB	32	Osharmar Abercrombie (Sr.)		33	Alex James (So.)
RB	21	Marcus Outlow (Jr.)		39	Jah-Maine Martin (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	46	Myles White (So.)		95	**Tarrol Stafford (Jr.)**
DT	93	Ja'ree Tolbert (Jr.)		52	C.J. Brewer (Fr.)
DT	90	**Dwayne Price (Sr.)**		98	Jalen Washington (Jr.)
DE	51	**Marcus Williamson (Sr.)**		97	Tarron Jackson (Fr.)
OLB	30	Laqavious Paul (So.)		38	Jarius McMillan (Sr.)
ILB	9	**Shane Johnson (Sr.)**		29	Silas Kelly (Fr.)
OLB	6	Kerron Johnson (Sr.)		41	Michael Billings (Jr.)
CB	17	**Anthony Chesley (Jr.)**		35	Jacqez Hairston (So.)
CB	2	Dontay Hears (Sr.)		28	Johnathan Smith (Fr.)
S	11	Nicholas Clark (Sr.)		1	Eric Church (Sr.)
S	33	Allen Hall (Jr.)		26	Amir Howard (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	95	Masamitsu Ishibashi (Sr.)	KR	19	Ky'Jon Tyler (So.)
P	35	Evan Rabon (Jr.)	PR	8	Chris Jones (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tyler Keane, 105-67-809-2, 10 TDs
Rushing: Osharmar Abercrombie, 74 att., 396 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Chris Jones, 22 rec., 323 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Shane Johnson, 66
Sacks: Marcus Williamson, 3.5; Myles White, 3.5
Interceptions: Anthony Chesley, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Joe Moglia
Record at School: 51-15 (5 years)
Career Record: 51-15 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jamey Chadwell
Defensive Coordinator: Mickey Matthews
Conway, SC • Brooks Stadium (15,000)

Coastal Carolina University Athletics

GEORGIA SOUTHERN EAGLES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **111** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **7** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 4-4 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Auburn
Sept.	9	New Hampshire
Sept.	23	at Indiana
Oct.	4	Arkansas State
Oct.	14	New Mexico State
Oct.	21	at Massachusetts
Oct.	28	at Troy
Nov.	4	Georgia State
Nov.	9	at Appalachian State
Nov.	18	South Alabama
Nov.	25	at UL Lafayette
Dec.	2	at Coastal Carolina

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 5-7, 4-4 SUN BELT

Sept.	3	Savannah State	W	54-0
Sept.	10	at South Alabama	W	24-9
Sept.	17	ULM	W	23-21
Sept.	24	at Western Michigan	L	31-49
Oct.	5	at Arkansas State	L	26-27
Oct.	15	at Georgia Tech	L	24-35
Oct.	22	at New Mexico State	W	22-19
Oct.	27	Appalachian State	L	10-34
Nov.	5	at Ole Miss	L	27-37
Nov.	10	Louisiana	L	26-33
Nov.	19	at Georgia State	L	24-30
Dec.	3	Troy	W	28-24

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tré Allen, LB, Stockbridge, GA
2. Grant Walker, RB, Ellenwood, GA
3. Demetrice Lofton, DL, Fairburn, GA
4. Brian Miller, DE, Savannah, GA
5. Raymond Johnson III, DE, Sumter, SC
6. Jaden Garrett, CB, Plant City, FL
7. Wesley Kennedy III, ATH, Savannah, GA
8. Chris Harris Jr., LB, Savannah, GA
9. Kenton Tucker Jr., DL, Jacksonville, FL
10. Kenderick Duncan Jr., S, Stockbridge, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	26.6 ppg	5	78
Rushing	224.2 ypg	2	29
Passing	155.7 ypg	11	117
Total	379.8 ypg	6	91
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.5 ppg	5	52
Rushing	167.1 ypg	6	58
Passing	229.5 ypg	6	69
Total	396.6 ypg	7	58
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	5	54

STAT CORNER

+0.8

The Eagles averaged 4.9 points per trip inside the 40 and allowed 4.1. This plus-0.8 margin was 18th in FBS and best in the Sun Belt.

OFFENSE Outside of the service academies, no program in college football identifies with the option attack as closely as Georgia Southern. And after a rocky season under Tyson Summers, who gave lip service to the option but actually installed a hybrid spread offense that regressed significantly in the Sun Belt, the Eagles are going back to a flexbone inspired by current Georgia Tech and former Georgia Southern coach Paul Johnson. Bryan Cook, who worked under Johnson the past four seasons as quarterbacks and B-backs coach, will have to re-shape the offense without quarterbacks Kevin Ellison and Favian Upshaw and running back Matt Breida, who accounted for 62 percent of the team's 2,690 rushing yards last season.

Now, there are plenty of question marks surrounding the quarterback position, where speed and decision-making will be crucial. Sophomore Seth Shuman, whose redshirt was pulled out of injury-related necessity last season, has 114 snaps under his belt. But Shai Werts, a redshirt freshman, may ultimately fit better as a dual-threat talent.

With five players returning who have starting experience, the offensive line should be a strength, but there's no obvious replacement for all-league center Andy Kwon. If that unit jells, the Eagles could get back on track quickly.

DEFENSE A year ago, Georgia Southern was young in the secondary but loaded with upperclassmen in the front seven. And while the Eagles were solid against the run, they weren't able to provide much assistance with the pass rush, sacking opposing quarterbacks just 11 times all season.

Now the script has flipped. The Eagles return the core of their back end but will have to replace seven of their top nine linemen and nearly all of their linebacking unit. It will help to get linebacker Chris DeLaRosa back after he missed more than half the season with a high ankle sprain, but Georgia Southern will need unproven players such as sophomore Lane Ecton, who moved from safety to strong-side linebacker in the spring, to step up. Georgia Southern has focused a lot of attention on defense in its recruiting and will need junior college transfers, including Tomarcio Reese, to play immediately and stabilize the front seven.

Georgia Southern's experience in the defensive backfield should pay off. Former walk-on safety R.J. Murray, who took a huge step forward last season, could get in the all-conference conversation alongside Joshua Moon.

SPECIALISTS The Eagles graduated a standout in Lou Groza Award finalist Younghoe Koo, who made 19-of-20 field goals last season. Sophomore Tyler Bass is his likely replacement. Georgia Southern needs to get more production from punter Matt Flynn, who averaged just 39 yards last season but did pin 11 of his 56 kicks inside the 20-yard line. The Eagles' turnover at several skill positions will impact them in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS It's never a good sign when an athletic director has to release a statement in support of his coach after Year 1, but that's exactly what Tom Kleinlein did after Summers' disappointing 5–7 debut. Give Summers credit for making some adjustments, including an overhaul of his offensive staff and an admission that running the option is the best way to win in Statesboro. Still, last season should have been a honeymoon with 22 seniors who had been part of a winning program. Instead, Georgia Southern struggled mightily both on the field and in public relations. Now Georgia Southern will have to replace 15 starters, including its best skill players and much of its defense. It could be a bumpy ride again. But if the younger players Summers recruited start to contribute, his philosophy may start to take hold and portend better results in 2018.



JOSHUA MOON

"You associate them with the option, so last year when they were trying to throw the ball a bunch, they really got away from their identity."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	6	Myles Campbell (Sr.)	31	Mike Summers Jr. (Sr.)	
WR	85	Malik Henry (Jr.)	17	Obe Fortune (So.)	
LT	58	**Jeremiah Culbreth (Jr.)**	67	Alex Smith (Fr.)	
LG	62	**Ryan Northrup (Jr.)**	53	Tommy Boynton (Jr.)	
C	75	**Curtis Rainey (Jr.)**	69	Drake Grall (Jr.)	
RG	74	Lawrence Edwards (Fr.)	66	Jake Edwards (Jr.)	
RT	61	Drew Wilson (So.)	80	Kevin Ackerman (So.)	
TE	23	Mark Michaud (So.)	46	Ross Alexander (Sr.)	
QB	10	Seth Shuman (So.)	18	Shai Werts (Fr.)	
RB	1	L.A. Ramsby (Sr.)	29	Demarcus Godfrey (Sr.)	
RB	21	Wesley Fields (Jr.)	32	Troy Stewart (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	91	**Logan Hunt (Jr.)**	41	Deshon Cooper (Jr.)
DT	90	**Darrius Sapp (Sr.)**	95	Ian Bush (Jr.)
NT		Brian Miller (Fr.)	57	Zack Copeland (Jr.)
DE		Demetrice Lofton (Fr.)	58	Traver Vliem (Fr.)
OLB		Tomarcio Reese (Jr.)	50	Todd Bradley (So.)
ILB	34	Chris DeLaRosa (Sr.)		Tré Allen (Fr.)
OLB	45	Lane Ecton (So.)	47	Randy Wade Jr. (Fr.)
CB	20	Kindle Vildor (So.)	4	**Monquavion Brinson (Fr.)**
CB	30	Jessie Liptrot (So.)	48	Christian Matthew (Sr.)
SS	2	R.J. Murray (Jr.)	24	Sean Freeman (Jr.)
FS	22	**Joshua Moon (Jr.)**	26	Jay Bowdry (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Tyler Bass (So.)	KR	85	Malik Henry (Jr.)
P	55	Matt Flynn (Sr.)	PR	6	Myles Campbell (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Seth Shuman, 72-34-357-3, 1 TD
Rushing: Wesley Fields, 94 att., 492 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Myles Campbell, 31 rec., 384 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Joshua Moon, 72
Sacks: Chris DeLaRosa, 1.5
Interceptions: Joshua Moon, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Tyson Summers
Record at School: 5-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 5-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Bryan Cook
Defensive Coordinator: Lorenzo Costantini
Statesboro, GA • Paulson Stadium (25,000)

Georgia Southern Athletics

GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **121** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **9** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	Tennessee State
Sept.	16	at Penn State
Sept.	23	at Charlotte
Sept.	30	Memphis
Oct.	7	at Coastal Carolina
Oct.	14	at UL Monroe
Oct.	21	Troy
Oct.	26	South Alabama
Nov.	4	at Georgia Southern
Nov.	11	at Texas State
Nov.	25	Appalachian State
Dec.	2	Idaho

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 SUN BELT

Sept.	2	Ball State	L	21-31
Sept.	10	at Air Force	L	14-48
Sept.	17	at Wisconsin	L	17-23
Oct.	1	at Appalachian State	L	3-17
Oct.	8	Texas State	W	41-21
Oct.	15	at Troy	L	21-31
Oct.	22	UT Martin	W	31-6
Oct.	29	at South Alabama	L	10-13
Nov.	3	Arkansas State	L	16-31
Nov.	12	ULM	L	23-37
Nov.	19	Georgia Southern	W	30-24
Dec.	3	at Idaho	L	12-37

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Connor Robbins, OL, St. Augustine, FL
2. Jack Walker, QB, Madison, MS
3. Jaylon Jones, S, Dacula, GA
4. Jalen Jackson, OL, Loganville, GA
5. Pat Bartlett, OL, Newtown, PA
6. Chris Bacon, S, Atlanta, GA
7. Roger Carter, TE, Columbia, SC
8. Tamir Jones, WR, Norcross, GA
9. Kerryon Richardson, CB, W. Columbia, SC
10. Chris Sibilia, OL, Suwanee, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.9 ppg	10	121
Rushing	87.7 ypg	10	126
Passing	246.3 ypg	3	52
Total	333.9 ypg	10	119
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.6 ppg	6	54
Rushing	206.8 ypg	7	95
Passing	173.9 ypg	1	8
Total	380.7 ypg	5	46
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	9	98

STAT CORNER

-7.9

GSU's field position margin was minus-7.9 yards per drive (126th in FBS), which negated a per-play advantage of 0.4 yards.

OFFENSE Though Georgia State is committed to running a one-back spread system under new coach Shawn Elliott, the longtime offensive line coach knows that winning up front will be the biggest key to whether he can succeed in the Sun Belt over the long haul. "With our location, we think we can go recruit skill positions in this area and get talent fairly easily," Elliott says. "But we're going to have to build it from the center out."

Elliott inherits four starters returning on the offensive line, leading rusher Kyler Neal and receiver Penny Hart, who was one of the league's most dynamic playmakers as a freshman in 2015 (71 catches, 1,099 yards) but redshirted last season due to a broken foot. Still, the Panthers averaged just 19.9 points last season and were 10th in the Sun Belt in total offense, so Elliott is looking to establish a primary running back, likely Neal, and get better play at quarterback. That could come from senior Conner Manning, who returns off a year when he threw for 2,684 yards and 16 touchdowns, or someone with more mobility like sophomore Aaron Winchester, who ran for 139 yards in his two starts last season.

"We want to make teams defend all 11 players," Elliott says.

DEFENSE Despite the Panthers taking a major step back to 3–9 last year, the defense was solid enough to keep them in a lot of games. That should continue, as the previous staff left Elliott with experience in the secondary and a few potential difference makers up front. "We're going to be a three-man front and have the ability to mix it up a little bit with some pressure packages," Elliott says. "We feel like we have good personnel. If we can get some pressure on the quarterback, I think we'll be OK."

In a league with so many wide-open offenses, it's a huge advantage to have a cornerback tandem of Chandon Sullivan and Jerome Smith, who were crucial in Georgia State's not allowing a single play of more than 50 yards last season. Sixth-year senior Bryan Williams has also been good at safety when healthy, enhancing a defensive core that gives the Panthers a lot of comfort as they build depth through better recruiting.

Though the Panthers lose two-time All-Sun Belt defensive end Shawanye Lawrence, three-year starter Mackendy Cheridor should anchor the pass rush (7.5 career sacks), and there's decent linebacker speed with Michael Shaw, who had 12 tackles for a loss last season.

SPECIALISTS Kicking is a significant area of concern, as the Panthers will choose between two placekickers coming off redshirt years or else have punter Brandon Wright handle both duties. Georgia State also struggled in coverage and got very few big plays from returns last year, so Elliott will be heavily involved in revamping the special teams "from top to bottom," a process that will continue through fall camp.

FINAL ANALYSIS Elliott is the third head coach since Georgia State started its program in 2010, but he's in the best position to enjoy some success. Not only are the Panthers moving into their own stadium, a renovation of the Atlanta Braves' former home, but other facilities have also been upgraded to Sun Belt level. Plus, Elliott has experience recruiting in the area, having spent the last seven years at South Carolina, and he knows the importance of connecting the program to local high schools.

Though the talent level should improve quickly, his first team should be good enough defensively to crack the top half of the conference if he can find an upgrade at quarterback. If not, every week will be a struggle to put points on the board.



PENNY HART

"Offensively, they struggled to throw the ball. They just had a hard time completing third downs, and ultimately that's what got Trent (Miles) fired."
— An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	18	Penny Hart (So.)	4	Jawan Nobles (So.)
WR	15	**Todd Boyd (Sr.)**	14	Devin Gentry (So.)
WR	17	**Glenn Smith (Sr.)**	1	Kendrick Dorn (Sr.)
LT	76	**Hunter Atkinson (So.)**	70	Chris Sibilia (Fr.)
LG	63	Davis Moore (Sr.)	60	Jaylen Fareed (Sr.)
C	72	**Gabe Mobley (Jr.)**	73	Nick Meyer (Fr.)
RG	56	**Alex Stoehr (Sr.)**	65	Shamarious Gilmore (Fr.)
RT	74	**Sebastian Willer (Sr.)**	69	Lucas Johnson (Jr.)
TE	88	Ari Werts (Jr.)	46	Jacob Nesmith (Sr.)
QB	11	Aaron Winchester (So)	7	**Conner Manning (Sr.)**
RB	25	Kyler Neal (Sr.)	5	Tra Barnett (So.)

DEFENSE (8)

DE	5	**Mackendy Cheridor (Sr.)**	62	Will Cunningham (Sr.)
NG	91	**Julien Laurent (Sr.)**	53	Terry Thomas (So.)
DE	95	**Marterious Allen (Jr.)**	30	Javonte Lain (So.)
OLB	44	**Michael Shaw (Jr.)**	33	James Traylor (Sr.)
ILB	42	**Trey Payne (Sr.)**	13	Charlie Patrick (So.)
ILB	34	Niemus Bryant (Jr.)	32	Malik Ricks (Sr.)
OLB	2	Ed Curney (So.)	39	Chase Middleton (Jr.)
CB	10	**Chandon Sullivan (Sr.)**	29	B.J. Clay (Sr.)
CB	16	**Jerome Smith (Jr.)**	9	Cedric Stone (So.)
SS	20	**Bryan Williams (Sr.)**	26	Kendrec Grady (Fr.)
FS	21	Antreal Allen (Sr.)	31	Ronald Peterkin (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	94	Barry Brown (Fr.)	KR	17	Glenn Smith (Sr.)
P	93	Brandon Wright (So.)	PR	18	Penny Hart (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Conner Manning, 373-207-2,684-13, 16 TDs
Rushing: Kyler Neal, 75 att., 314 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Glenn Smith, 40 rec., 547 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Michael Shaw, 76
Sacks: Michael Shaw, 3.0
Interceptions: Three players tied with 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Shawn Elliott
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 1-5 (Interim at South Carolina)
Offensive Coordinator: Travis Trickett
Defensive Coordinator: Nate Fuqua
Atlanta, GA • Georgia State Stadium (22,000)

Georgia State Athletics

IDAHO VANDALS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **104** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **5** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 4-4 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	Sacramento State
Sept.	9	UNLV
Sept.	16	at Western Michigan
Sept.	23	at South Alabama
Oct.	7	UL Lafayette
Oct.	14	Appalachian State
Oct.	21	at Missouri
Oct.	28	UL Monroe
Nov.	2	at Troy
Nov.	18	Coastal Carolina
Nov.	25	at New Mexico State
Dec.	2	at Georgia State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4, 6-2 SUN BELT

Sept.	1	Montana State	W	20-17
Sept.	10	at Washington	L	14-59
Sept.	17	at Washington State	L	6-56
Sept.	24	at UNLV	(ot) W	33-30
Oct.	1	Troy	L	13-34
Oct.	8	at ULM	W	34-31
Oct.	15	New Mexico State	W	55-23
Oct.	22	at Appalachian State	L	19-37
Nov.	5	at Louisiana	W	23-13
Nov.	12	at Texas State	W	47-14
Nov.	26	South Alabama	W	38-31
Dec.	3	Georgia State	W	37-12
Dec.	22	vs. Colorado State #	W	61-50

#Potato Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Dylan Lemle, QB, Los Angeles, CA
2. Christian Elliss, LB, Highlands Ranch, CO
3. Maxim Moore, OL/DL, Eagle, ID
4. Tyrece Parker, CB, Topeka, KS
5. Tyrese Dedmon, S, Lancaster, CA
6. Cutrell Haywood, WR, Stockton, CA
7. Harrison Ashby, TE, Boise, ID
8. Roshaun Johnson, RB, Goodyear, AZ
9. Seth Carnahan, OL, Sumner, WA
10. Dylan Korte, OL, Petaluma, CA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.8 ppg	2	54
Rushing	147.8 ypg	7	98
Passing	249.2 ypg	2	51
Total	397.0 ypg	4	74
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.3 ppg	8	86
Rushing	144.8 ypg	5	40
Passing	283.5 ypg	11	121
Total	428.3 ypg	8	78
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.85	1	10

STAT CORNER

6.9

Idaho's possessions had an average starting point at the 33.5-yard line. It's opponents at the 26.6. The 6.9-yard field-position margin ranked sixth in FBS.

OFFENSE The Vandals are loaded at the skill positions, but coach Paul Petrino needs to replace three starters on the offensive line and the top two tight ends to give his talented quarterback, running backs and wide receivers time and space to operate.

Quarterback Matt Linehan has started since his freshman season, and the senior is coming off a 19-touchdown campaign that saw him throw for 3,184 yards and earn MVP honors at the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl.

Linehan will be without his top two targets from last season — tight ends Trent Cowan and Deon Watson — but seniors Alfonso Onunwor (39 receptions, 403 yards) and Jacob Sannon (28, 303) give the 6'3", 239-pound quarterback threats on the outside.

Idaho's strength on offense is in the backfield, where Isaiah Saunders (731 yards) and Aaron Duckworth (672) form a productive two-headed monster. They will be pushed by redshirt freshman Dylan Thigpen, who has been so impressive that Denzal Brantley, last year's third-leading rusher, switched to defensive back.

The giant question will be the offensive line. Two full-time starters return — tackle Jordan Rose and guard Noah Johnson — but can the Vandals put together a unit that can protect Linehan and open holes for the talented backfield? If the line isn't a liability, Idaho's offense should flourish.

DEFENSE Five starters return from last season, including junior linebacker Tony Lashley, who led the Vandals with 107 tackles, including 10 for a loss. Fellow linebacker Kaden Elliss also returns, and he had five interceptions and forced a team-high three fumbles last season.

The defensive line has some major rebuilding to do, but end Aikeem Coleman gives Idaho a proven pass rusher. The senior had a team-high eight sacks and seven quarterback hits. Seniors Arie Anderson and Zach Cable must assume larger roles and be productive for the Vandals' front to make a huge impact.

Two starting cornerbacks must be replaced, but sophomore Lloyd Hightower has starting experience, and safety Armond Hawkins is the unit's leader. Brantley, the converted running back, is a big hitter with a bright future.

Idaho's defense can be solid if the D-line holds up and the linebacking corps continues to improve and make plays.

SPECIALISTS Without a doubt, the biggest challenge for Idaho will be replacing four-year starter Austin Rehkow, who handled the kicking and punting chores with excellent results. The two-man battle between redshirt freshman Cade Coffey and sophomore Sam Fenlason is one to keep an eye on. The Vandals do have experienced returners in Onunwor and Brantley, but Idaho's history of strong kicking and punting must continue for the program to record back-to-back winning seasons for the first time since 1998-99.

FINAL ANALYSIS It's the last hurrah for Idaho as an FBS program, and you can bet the Vandals will have a chip on their shoulder. Idaho won nine games last season — matching its best total in football's highest division — and has one last chance to win its first conference title as an FBS member since 1998. It's been quite a turnaround for a program that won nine games combined from 2011-15.

With a favorable schedule — only one game against a Power-5 conference opponent (Missouri) and six home games, including two of the top teams in the conference heading to Moscow — the Vandals feel they can go out in style. They'll need to stay healthy and have both the offensive and defensive fronts grow up quickly. If that happens, Idaho may have the last laugh and a chance to remain perfect in bowl games (they're 3–0 all time).



MATT LINEHAN

"Tough deal. They are dropping down to FCS, but in my mind they're good enough to compete. They definitely belong from a talent standpoint."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	1	Alfonso Onunwor (Sr.)	26	Reuben Mwehla (Sr.)
WR	26	Reuben Mwehla (Sr.)	4	Mason Petrino (So.)
WR	8	**Jacob Sannon (Sr.)**	2	David Ungerer (Jr.)
LT	76	**Jordan Rose (Sr.)**	69	Carlos Collado III (Fr.)
LG	74	**Noah Johnson (So.)**	60	D.J. Luby (Fr.)
C	66	Conner Vrba (Fr.)	71	Brett Carter (Fr.)
RG	70	Zion Dixon (So.)	73	Darius Archie (Fr.)
RT	69	Carlos Collado III (Fr.)	77	Tanner Mauseth (So.)
TE	85	Joe Wysocki (So.)	80	Alex James (Jr.)
QB	10	**Matt Linehan (Sr.)**	4	Mason Petrino (So.)
RB	21	Isaiah Saunders (Jr.)	23	Aaron Duckworth (Sr.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	97	**Aikeem Coleman (Sr.)**	22	Leonard Hazewood IV (Sr.)
NG	93	Arie Anderson (Sr.)	55	Rahsaan Crawford (Fr.)
DT	90	Zach Cable (Sr.)	41	Dylan Beeler (Fr.)
SLB	3	**Kaden Elliss (Jr.)**	10	Ty Graham (So.)
MLB	33	**Tony Lashley (Jr.)**	40	Mike Linehan (So.)
WLB	50	**Ed Hall (Jr.)**	44	Kyle Perry (Fr.)
BUCK	96	Gavin Whitesitt (So.)	82	Will Schmidt (Sr.)
CB	20	Dorian Clark (Jr.)	29	Sedrick Thomas (Fr.)
CB	5	Lloyd Hightower (So.)	39	Vaughn Daggs (Fr.)
FS	8	**Armond Hawkins (Sr.)**	15	Gunnar Amos (So.)
SS	4	Denzal Brantley (So.)	31	Qendarrion Barnett (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	Cade Coffey (Fr.)	KR	4	Denzal Brantley (So.)
P	52	San Fenlason (So.)	PR	1	Alfonso Onunwor (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Matt Linehan, 415-257-3,184-10, 19 TDs
Rushing: Isaiah Saunders, 159 att., 731 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Alfonso Onunwor, 39 rec., 403 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Tony Lashley 107
Sacks: Aikeem Coleman, 8.0
Interceptions: Kaden Elliss, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Paul Petrino
Record at School: 15-33 (4 years)
Career Record: 15-33 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kris Cinkovich
Defensive Coordinator: Mike Breske
Moscow, ID • Kibbie Dome (16,000)

Idaho Athletics

LOUISIANA RAGIN' CAJUNS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **110** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **6** • PROJECTED RECORD: **5-7, 4-4 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	SE Louisiana
Sept.	9	at Tulsa
Sept.	16	at Texas A&M
Sept.	23	UL Monroe
Oct.	7	at Idaho
Oct.	12	Texas State
Oct.	19	at Arkansas State
Nov.	4	at South Alabama
Nov.	11	at Ole Miss
Nov.	18	New Mexico State
Nov.	25	Georgia Southern
Dec.	2	at Appalachian State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 5-3 SUN BELT

Sept.	3	Boise State	L	10-45
Sept.	10	McNeese State	W	30-22
Sept.	17	South Alabama	W	28-23
Sept.	24	at Tulane (ot)	L	39-41
Oct.	1	at New Mexico State (ot)	L	31-37
Oct.	12	Appalachian State	L	0-24
Oct.	22	at Texas State	W	27-3
Nov.	5	Idaho	L	13-23
Nov.	10	at Georgia Southern	W	33-26
Nov.	19	at Georgia	L	21-35
Nov.	26	Arkansas State	W	24-19
Dec.	3	at ULM	W	30-3
Dec.	17	vs. Southern Miss #	L	21-28

#New Orleans Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Chase Rogers, TE, Bay St. Louis, MS
2. Lavante Epson, OL, Greenville, MS
3. Levi Lewis, QB, Baton Rouge, LA
4. Schdarren Archie, DB, Brandon, MS
5. Zi'Yon Hill, DL, New Iberia, LA
6. Earnest Patterson, WR, Brenham, TX*
7. Andre Jones, DE, Angie, LA
8. Karson Block, LB, Mission Viejo, CA
9. Kadon Harrison, QB, Port Arthur, TX
10. Ja'len Johnson, DB, Morgan City, LA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.6 ppg	8	109
Rushing	178.9 ypg	4	59
Passing	178.2 ypg	10	106
Total	357.2 ypg	9	108
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.3 ppg	4	46
Rushing	129.2 ypg	3	23
Passing	249.9 ypg	9	90
Total	379.1 ypg	4	43
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	7	58

STAT CORNER

3.9/4.1

Louisiana averaged 3.9 points per trip inside the 40-yard line, 113th in the nation. The defense did its part, however, allowing only 4.1 points per trip (35th).

OFFENSE All of last year's headliners on offense must be replaced, which for a team that finished 109th in scoring isn't necessarily a negative. At quarterback, that means the stage is set — finally — for junior Jordan Davis, the favorite to start last summer before he was upstaged by graduate transfer Anthony Jennings, a former starter at LSU. Jennings went wire-to-wire as QB1, but he never transcended his reputation as a shaky passer and finished with more interceptions (13) than touchdowns (11). That's not exactly a tough act for Davis to follow.

The same can't be said at running back, where outgoing senior Elijah McGuire amassed one of the most prolific careers in school history. But the top contenders there — Darius Hoggins, Jordan Wright and Raymond Calais — all had their moments last year in relief, and they'll have the benefit of running behind a line that returns four full-time starters.

The leading receiver, Al Riles, is gone, but holdovers Keenan Barnes, Ja'Marcus Bradley, and Michael Jacquet are poised to make strides entering their third year in the program — unless, of course, they're surpassed by Calif Gossett, a lanky, 6'5" redshirt freshman who began to flash some of his potential in the spring. If nothing else, Gossett's size should be an asset in the red zone, where ULL converted only a little over half of last year's trips into touchdowns.

DEFENSE The defense didn't do anything especially well in 2016, but it wasn't bad in any respect, either, and there's more than enough veteran talent on hand to offset the loss of leading tacklers Tra'maine Lightfoot and Otha Peters at linebacker. The good news starts with three returning starters on the defensive line, most notably Joe Dillon, who's already entrenched at Bandit end after racking up 13.5 tackles for a loss as a redshirt freshman. Inside, senior Taboris Lee has logged 26 consecutive starts at tackle.

The back end is in reliable hands, too, with seniors Tracy Walker and Travis Crawford back for their third and final go-round as the starting safeties. Other than linebacker, the big question is at corner, where one starter (Savion Brown) has graduated and another, senior Simeon Thomas, will be suspended at least two games due to academics. Thomas also lost all of the 2014 and '15 seasons to academics before returning to play in every game last year, and given that track record, his long-term status is hard to predict. Just in case, sophomore Damar'ren Mitchell spent most of his spring at cornerback after manning the nickel role as a true freshman.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Stevie Artigue, a hometown product, improved dramatically as a sophomore, connecting on 19-of-24 field goal attempts with a long of 49 yards. The punting duties are less certain: Last year's starter, Steven Coutts, apparently doesn't plan to return to the team from his native Australia. Instead, the Cajuns will turn to Harry McCollum, a graduate transfer with three years as a starter under his belt at Georgetown.

FINAL ANALYSIS Louisiana ended its sixth season under coach Mark Hudspeth where it realistically hopes to end every season, with a December trip to the New Orleans Bowl. Still, in most respects the 2016 team more closely resembled the outfit that went 4–8 in 2015 than the ones that finished 9–4 in each of Hudspeth's first four years, and it left no discernible identity or momentum to carry over into 2017. The defense should be solid again, but barring a revelatory turn from Davis or sophomore Dion Ray at quarterback, the outlook is for more of the same.



TRAVIS CRAWFORD

"I think the quarterback play hurt them last year. (Anthony Jennings) was really inconsistent, but they've always got a very talented roster."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	21	**Keenan Barnes (Jr.)**	85	Calif Gossett (Fr.)
WR	17	**Ja'Marcus Bradley (So.)**	19	Michael Jacquet (So.)
WR		Earnest Patterson (Jr.)	28	Chris Collins (Jr.)
LT	60	**D'Aquin Withrow (Sr.)**	66	Rico Robinson (So.)
LG	50	**Robert Hunt (So.)**	53	Christian Cederquist (Jr.)
C	67	Ken Marks (So.)	61	Cole Prudhomme (So.)
RG	75	**Kevin Dotson (So.)**	77	Adrian Goodacre (Jr.)
RT	72	**Grant Horst (Sr.)**	73	Craig Smith (Sr.)
TE	10	Matthew Barnes (Jr.)	11	Raynard Ford (Sr.)
QB	3	Jordan Davis (Jr.)	7	Dion Ray (So.)
RB	23	Darius Hoggins (Sr.)	27	Jordan Wright (So.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	46	**Jarvis Jeffries (Sr.)**	50	Trevara Miller (Sr.)
DT	92	**Taboris Lee (Sr.)**	98	LaDarrius Kidd (Jr.)
DT	90	Kevon Perry (Sr.)	95	Rodrick Stephens (Sr.)
DE	3	**Joe Dillon (So.)**	56	Terrence Jones (So.)
LB	30	T.J. Posey (Sr.)	28	Karson Block (Jr.)
LB	38	Terik Miller (So.)	59	Jacques Boudreaux (So.)
NB	27	Levarious Varnado (Sr.)	31	Corey Turner (Jr.)
CB	17	**Damar'ren Mitchell (So.)**	11	Lorenzo Cryer (Jr.)
CB	19	Troy McCollum (Sr.)	8	Simeon Thomas (Sr.)
SS	23	**Tracy Walker (Sr.)**	34	Denarius Howard (Sr.)
FS	16	**Travis Crawford (Sr.)**	18	Blair Brooks (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	36	Stevie Artigue (Jr.)	KR	25	Raymond Calais (So.)
P	81	Harry McCollum (Sr.)	PR	27	Levarious Varnado (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jordan Davis, 3-2-7-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Darius Hoggins, 51 att., 281 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Keenan Barnes, 31 rec., 418 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Travis Crawford, 71
Sacks: Joe Dillon, 7.0
Interceptions: Tracy Walker, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mark Hudspeth
Record at School: 46-31 (6 years)
Career Record: 112-52 (13 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Will Hall
Defensive Coordinators: Charlie Harbison, Mike Lucas
Lafayette, LA • Cajun Field (36,900)

Jonathan Bachman/Getty Images

NEW MEXICO STATE AGGIES

NATIONAL FORECAST: **125** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **11** • PROJECTED RECORD: **3-9, 2-6 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	at Arizona State
Sept.	9	at New Mexico
Sept.	16	Troy
Sept.	23	UTEP
Sept.	30	at Arkansas
Oct.	7	at Appalachian State
Oct.	14	at Georgia Southern
Oct.	28	Arkansas State
Nov.	4	at Texas State
Nov.	18	at UL Lafayette
Nov.	25	Idaho
Dec.	2	South Alabama

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 SUN BELT

Sept.	3	at UTEP	L	22-38
Sept.	10	New Mexico	W	32-31
Sept.	17	at Kentucky	L	42-62
Sept.	24	at Troy	L	6-52
Oct.	1	Louisiana	(ot) W	37-31
Oct.	15	at Idaho	L	23-55
Oct.	22	Georgia Southern	L	19-22
Oct.	29	at Texas A&M	L	10-52
Nov.	12	at Arkansas State	L	22-41
Nov.	19	Texas State	W	50-10
Nov.	26	Appalachian State	L	7-37
Dec.	3	at South Alabama	L	28-35

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jaylon Mascorro, LB, Refugio, TX
2. Josh Adkins, QB, Spring Branch, TX
3. Jeremy Hodge, QB, Plano, TX
4. Xander Yarberough, TE, San Antonio, TX
5. Tre Randle, DL, Chicago, IL*
6. Gaven Swinson, WR, Las Cruces, NM
7. Nakota Shepard-Creer, DB, Vallejo, CA*
8. Matthew Young, LB, Las Cruces, NM
9. Davis Harker, OL, Tulsa, OK*
10. Dylan Brown, K, Chandler, AZ*

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.8 ppg	7	97
Rushing	169.8 ypg	5	70
Passing	244.9 ypg	4	54
Total	414.7 ypg	3	64
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	38.8 ppg	9	121
Rushing	244.3 ypg	10	118
Passing	252.4 ypg	10	97
Total	496.7 ypg	11	121
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
+1	+0.08	5	54

STAT CORNER

6.4

After missing three games with a sports hernia, Larry Rose III averaged just 4.1 yards per carry for four games, then 6.4 over his last five.

OFFENSE Doug Martin has proven throughout his four years at New Mexico State that the Aggies can move the football and put points on the scoreboard in the Sun Belt Conference.

The program received some good news when quarterback Tyler Rogers was granted a medical waiver for a fifth year due to an injury sustained in 2015, giving the Aggies seven returning starters on the offensive side of the ball in 2017. Rogers was solid last fall, cutting back on interceptions (12) that plagued him in 2014 (23) while proving to be a legitimate dual threat. He finished third in the Sun Belt in total offense, rushing for a career-best 333 yards to go along with his 2,603 passing yards.

Despite Rogers' improvement, the Aggies' success will still rest on the legs of senior running back Larry Rose III. Rose earned third-team All-America honors from the AP in 2015 but was limited to nine games in 2016 due to sports hernia surgery in the offseason. He showed flashes late in the year as he returned to full speed, finishing with 865 yards on 5.4 yards per carry.

More positive signs for the Aggies' offense: Six players with starting experience return on the offensive line, and the team's top five pass catchers will be back.

DEFENSE Frank Spaziani, a former head coach at Boston College, was hired prior to the 2016 season to fix a New Mexico State defense that ranked 125th in the nation the previous season. The Aggies improved their yards allowed by 25.6 per game but still ranked 121st nationally. Clearly, there is still work to be done.

New Mexico State returns nine starters, but there figure to be some new faces in the secondary. The Aggies signed four junior college defensive backs in an attempt to cut down on the 32 plays of 30 or more yards they allowed last year.

New Mexico State must find a replacement for Rodney Butler, a middle linebacker who led the country with 13.8 tackles per game. After missing the 2016 season with a lower leg injury, junior Javahn Fergurson will join junior college transfer Lui Fa'amasino and senior Dalton Herington in trying to fill the void. Strong-side junior linebacker Terrill Hanks was a playmaker for the Aggies, finishing third on the team in 2016 with 103 tackles.

SPECIALISTS Special teams were poor across the board in 2016 — the Aggies allowed four punt returns for touchdowns and one kickoff return touchdown. Junior placekicker Parker Davidson has missed 11 extra points in his first two years, prompting the Aggies to sign junior college transfer Dylan Brown. Freshman punter Payton Theisler was a bright spot, although the Aggies ranked 124th nationally in net punting.

FINAL ANALYSIS This will be New Mexico State's final season in the Sun Belt Conference. The Aggies will be an Independent in 2018 and beyond.

They face a difficult schedule with rivalry games against New Mexico and UTEP along with dates with all six of the Sun Belt's 2016 bowl teams.

New Mexico State has proven that it's capable of moving the football against most teams on the schedule (the Aggies scored 42 points at Kentucky last year without Rose). Rogers and the offense will need to improve in the red zone in 2017, where they committed seven turnovers and scored a touchdown on a Sun Belt-low 50 percent of their trips.

But the real problem is defense. Unless Spaziani can get this unit to take a significant step forward, it's difficult to see the Aggies making much of a move in their final season in the league.



LARRY ROSE III

"Their offensive line really struggled, but their QB [Tyler Rogers] gets the ball out quick and they don't have to protect him all day."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	16	Jaleel Scott (Sr.)	7	**Greg Hogan (Sr.)**
WR	6	Josh Aganon (Sr.)	13	Johnathan Boone (Jr.)
SLOT	10	**Izaiah Lottie (So.)**	2	OJ Clark (So.)
LT	76	**Sage Doxtater (So.)**	55	**Sebastian Anderson (So.)**
LG	78	Brian Trujillo (So)	61	Jefferson Hagan (So.)
C	74	Jamin Smith (Sr.)		Davis Harker (Jr.)
RG	58	**Dezmand Candelarie (Sr.)**		Billy Sharmoug (Jr.)
RT	72	Brayton Medina (Sr.)	65	Tony Bello (So.)
TE		Bryce Roberts (Fr.)	89	Jackson Solbeck (Jr.)
QB	17	**Tyler Rogers (Sr.)**	12	Nick Jeanty (Jr.)
RB	3	**Larry Rose III (Sr.)**	14	Jason Huntley (So.)

DEFENSE (9)

DE	8	**Jassavia Reese (Jr.)**	10	Cedric Wilcots (So.)
DT	51	**Roy Lopez (So.)**	99	Myles Vigne (So.)
NT	90	**Kourtland Busby (Sr.)**	98	Darius Anderson (So.)
DE	9	Stody Bradley (Sr.)	3	Derek Ibekwe (Sr.)
OLB	28	Shane Jackson (So.)	31	**Dalton Herrington (Sr.)**
MLB	7	Javahn Fergurson (Jr.)		Lui Fa'amasino (Jr.)
OLB	2	**Terrill Hanks (Jr.)**	20	Jonathan Hood (Jr.)
CB	29	Jared Phipps (So.)		Komotay Koffie (So.)
CB	22	**Shamad Lomax (So.)**	4	**DeMarcus Owens (Jr.)**
FS	1	**Jacob Nwangwa (Sr.)**	19	Austin Perkins (So.)
SS	21	**Jaden Wright (Sr.)**	12	Tymon Locklin (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	24	Parker Davidson (Jr.)	KR	2	OJ Clark (So.)
P	16	Payton Theisler (So.)	PR	21	Jaden Wright (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tyler Rogers, 404-224-2,603-12, 16 TDs
Rushing: Larry Rose III, 159 att., 865 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: OJ Clark, 43 rec., 338 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Dalton Herrington, 113
Sacks: Terrill Hanks, 2.0; Dalton Rocha, 2.0
Interceptions: Jaden Wright, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Doug Martin
Record at School: 10-38 (4 years)
Career Record: 39-91 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Doug Martin
Defensive Coordinator: Frank Spaziani
Las Cruces, NM • Aggie Memorial Stadium (30,343)

Joe Vogan

SOUTH ALABAMA JAGUARS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **103** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **4** • PROJECTED RECORD: **6-6, 5-3 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Ole Miss	
Sept. 9	Oklahoma State	
Sept. 16	Alabama A&M	
Sept. 23	Idaho	
Sept. 30	at Louisiana Tech	
Oct. 11	at Troy	
Oct. 21	UL Monroe	
Oct. 26	at Georgia State	
Nov. 4	UL Lafayette	
Nov. 11	Arkansas State	
Nov. 18	at Georgia Southern	
Dec. 2	at New Mexico State	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 2-6 SUN BELT

Sept. 3	at Mississippi State		W	21-20
Sept. 10	Georgia Southern		L	9-24
Sept. 17	at Louisiana		L	23-28
Sept. 24	Nicholls	(ot)	W	41-40
Oct. 1	San Diego State		W	42-24
Oct. 15	at Arkansas State		L	7-17
Oct. 20	Troy		L	21-28
Oct. 29	Georgia State		W	13-10
Nov. 5	at ULM		L	35-42
Nov. 19	Presbyterian		W	31-7
Nov. 26	at Idaho		L	31-38
Dec. 3	New Mexico State		W	35-28
Dec. 30	vs. Air Force #		L	21-45

#Arizona Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kendric Haynes, LB, Mobile, AL
2. AJ DeShazor, S, Lakeland, FL
3. Devin Rockette, CB, Oxford, MS
4. Jalon Sheffield, DL, Tallahassee, FL
5. Davyn Flenord, WR, Lineville, AL
6. Tywun Walters, RB, Lambert, MS*
7. Cephus Johnson, QB, Mobile, AL
8. Kenard King, ATH, Auburndale, FL
9. Jalen Tolbert, WR, Mobile, AL
10. Gus Nave, CB, DeKalb, MS

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.4 ppg	6	92
Rushing	145.6 ypg	8	102
Passing	243.8 ypg	5	56
Total	389.4 ypg	5	82
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.0 ppg	7	56
Rushing	215.2 ypg	8	100
Passing	174.6 ypg	2	9
Total	389.8 ypg	6	53
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
-2	-0.15	8	78

STAT CORNER

+19/-13.5

USA won two games as at least a 19-point underdog in 2016 and lost a game as a 13.5-point favorite. That's a strange combination.

OFFENSE South Alabama has offensive strengths, but they don't necessarily mesh. The Jaguars return one of the Sun Belt's most productive quarterbacks, but no experienced wide receivers. They have a potentially record-breaking running back, but the offensive line must improve its run blocking to utilize his abilities.

Quarterback Dallas Davis led the Sun Belt in total offense at 268.3 yards per game. As long as he returns to full strength after offseason shoulder surgery, Davis should be among the conference's best quarterbacks. But no wide receiver with at least 10 receptions or 100 receiving yards returns, so expect tight end Maaseiah Francis to be a primary target.

Running back Xavier Johnson is a steady producer, rushing for 831 yards and 10 TDs last season. He enters his senior season only 362 yards shy of the career school record. He will get help from bruising junior college transfer Tywun Walters, but the one-two punch may be hampered by a line that struggled to open holes last season. At least three potential starters have been limited by injuries during the offseason, so their healthy return could determine the flexibility and performance of the line. The addition of Miami transfer Tyler Grimsley may help.

DEFENSE Injuries to last season's defensive line should benefit this unit. Former starters Jimmie Gipson and Tre Alford both sat out 2016, but they are back. And some of their replacements also return to create good competition and a deep rotation. Louisville transfer Finessé Middleton and Tyree Turner should remain key cogs after solid performances last season. Toss in Missouri transfer Rocel McWilliams and some young talent, and the defensive line could be the most improved unit on the team.

Linebackers Darrell Songy and Bull Barge are a dependable duo. Songy led the team with 100 tackles last season, and he's the best leader on the defense. Redshirt freshman Riley Cole impressed the coaches in the spring. USA's linebackers were instrumental in the team's third-down defense, which ranked in the top 25 nationally last season.

Jeremy Reaves is among the league's most versatile players. He earned All-Sun Belt honors as a nickel back in 2015 and a cornerback in 2016, and now he moves to safety to anchor a pass defense ranked ninth nationally last season. The rest of the secondary is relatively young but talented.

SPECIALISTS Kicker Gavin Patterson is accurate enough, but his range is limited. He made 10-of-12 field goals from 40 yards or less but missed all four attempts beyond 40 yards last season. USA ranked third nationally in punt coverage, but it must replace its all-conference punter. Corliss Waitman should get the job. Johnson is a solid kick returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS Coach Joey Jones has an odd track record in recent years. While some successful Sun Belt schools take their lumps in non-conference play and pile up wins in league games, USA has done the opposite. The Jaguars have a 6–3 non-conference record over the past two seasons, including upsets of Mississippi State (2016) and San Diego State (2015 and '16). But their back-to-back losing marks in Sun Belt play have hampered progress.

USA can squeeze into its third bowl game in four years, but health is a big factor. Injuries on the offensive and defensive lines scrambled the depth chart last season, and some players are still recovering. The offense has standouts in Davis and Johnson, but both will be wasted if the line does not develop. It points to a season similar to last year, when the Jaguars were potent on a given day but inconsistent over the long haul.



DARRELL SONGY

"They're one of the most talented teams in the league. Always very hard to beat. We thought they should have been a lot better last year."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	18	Jordan McCray (So.)	88	Jahmmir Taylor (Sr.)	
WR	17	Sa'Mory Collier (Sr.)	83	Sam Harris (Jr.)	
WR	7	Quinton Lane (Sr.)	15	Kawaan Baker (So.)	
LT	57	**Noah Fisher (Jr.)**	54	Khameron Taylor (So.)	
LG	69	Tyler Grimsley (So.)	56	Rowan Godwin (So.)	
C	76	**Dominic Esposito (Sr.)**	75	Harrison Louden (Sr.)	
RG	58	Nelson Santiago (So.)	55	D'Tavieus Taylor (Sr.)	
RT	64	Ryan Alexander (So.)	70	Troy Thingstad (So.)	
TE	85	Maaseiah Francis (Jr.)	10	Zac Crosby (So.)	
QB	11	**Dallas Davis (Jr.)**	14	Evan Orth (Jr.)	
RB	28	**Xavier Johnson (Sr.)**	25	Tywun Walters (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (6)

DE	10	Finessé Middleton (Sr.)	98	Rocel McWilliams (Jr.)	
NT	56	**Zach Befort (Sr.)**	78	Tre Alford (Jr.)	
DT	12	**Tyree Turner (So.)**	74	Sean Brown (So.)	
DE	17	**Sean Grayer (Jr.)**	40	Jimmie Gipson (Sr.)	
MLB	32	**Darrell Songy (Sr.)**	8	Bull Barge (Jr.)	
OLB	22	Taji Stewart (So.)	33	Riley Cole (Fr.)	
CB	24	Darian Mills (Jr.)	16	Nigel Lawrence (Jr.)	
CB	2	Jalen Thompson (Jr.)	15	Bobby Flott (So.)	
NB	9	Malcolm Buggs (Jr.)	34	Khalil McDonald (So.)	
SS	14	**Neiko Robinson (Sr.)**	13	D.J. Daniels (So.)	
FS	1	**Jeremy Reaves (Sr.)**	38	T'Qwan Robinson (Sr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	89	Gavin Patterson (Jr.)	KR	28	Xavier Johnson (Sr.)
P	87	Corliss Waitman (Jr.)	PR	83	Sam Harris (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Dallas Davis, 349-198-2,706-12, 11 TDs
Rushing: Xavier Johnson, 151 att., 831 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Maaseiah Francis, 18 rec., 261 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Darrell Songy, 100
Sacks: Finessé Middleton, 4.5
Interceptions: Jalen Thompson, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Joey Jones
Record at School: 48-42 (8 years)
Career Record: 48-42 (8 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Bryant Vincent
Defensive Coordinator: Kane Wommack
Mobile, AL • Ladd-Peebles Stadium (33,471)

Bobby McDuffie/South Alabama Athletic Media Relations

TEXAS STATE BOBCATS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **129** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **12** • PROJECTED RECORD: **2-10, 1-7 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	Houston Baptist
Sept.	9	at Colorado
Sept.	16	Appalachian State
Sept.	23	UTSA
Sept.	30	at Wyoming
Oct.	7	UL Monroe
Oct.	12	at UL Lafayette
Oct.	28	at Coastal Carolina
Nov.	4	New Mexico State
Nov.	11	Georgia State
Nov.	18	at Arkansas State
Nov.	25	at Troy

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 2-10, 0-8 SUN BELT

Sept.	3	at Ohio	(ot) W	56-54
Sept.	17	at Arkansas	L	3-42
Sept.	24	Houston	L	3-64
Oct.	1	Incarnate Word	W	48-17
Oct.	8	at Georgia State	L	21-41
Oct.	15	at ULM	L	34-40
Oct.	22	Louisiana	L	3-27
Nov.	5	at Appalachian State	L	10-35
Nov.	12	Idaho	L	14-47
Nov.	19	at New Mexico State	L	10-50
Nov.	26	Troy	L	7-40
Dec.	3	Arkansas State	L	14-36

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kieston Roach, DB, Houston, TX
2. Jaylin Nelson, ATH, Duncanville, TX
3. Kishawn Kelley, QB, Corsicana, TX
4. Jaylen Gipson, QB, Mexia, TX
5. John Brannon, LB, McKinney, TX
6. Jakharious Smith, LB, Grand Prairie, TX
7. Anthony Smith, RB, Fort Worth, TX
8. Gjemar Daniels, DL, Kennedale, TX
9. Josh Newman, DB, Cedar Hill, TX
10. Kordell Rodgers, DB, Lufkin, TX

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	18.6 ppg	11	124
Rushing	82.4 ypg	11	128
Passing	219.9 ypg	7	77
Total	302.3 ypg	11	126
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	41.1 ppg	11	125
Rushing	222.3 ypg	9	106
Passing	248.8 ypg	8	87
Total	471.1 ypg	9	117
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
-14	-1.17	11	123

STAT CORNER

4.9/3.6

Texas State averaged 4.9 yards per play and 28 points per game over the first six games, then 3.6 and 10, respectively, thereafter.

OFFENSE After finishing 124th in scoring with an average of 18.6 points per game in 2016, the Texas State offense will return most of its starters with the exception of arguably the most important position on the field. Four-year starting quarterback Tyler Jones played his final season last year, leaving the Bobcats with a big hole to fill.

Damian Williams, a graduate transfer from Mississippi State, handled first-unit duties in the spring and is the expected starter, but the Bobcats have three freshman quarterbacks joining the team in June: Jaylen Gipson, Kishawn Kelley and Willie Jones III.

The biggest concern on offense will be on the line, which allowed 44 sacks in 12 games in 2016. This issue was addressed in recruiting as the Bobcats added five offensive linemen on Signing Day.

Junior running back Stedman Mayberry will return after leading the Bobcats in rushing last season with 593 yards. Mayberry will have to compete with six other running backs on Texas State's roster, including sophomore Anthony D. Taylor, who was the primary running back in the spring.

Texas State's top seven pass catchers from 2016 are returning, including junior Tyler Watts, who led the Bobcats in receptions with 43 catches out of the slot. Sophomore Thurman Morbley has moved from slot to flanker after catching 35 passes for 400 yards in 2016. Seniors Elijah King and Eric Luna are returning starters who have been injured and aren't expected back until fall camp.

DEFENSE Despite the efforts of freshman linebacker Bryan London (141 tackles, second in FBS), Texas State's defense fared just as poorly as the offense. The Bobcats finished the season 125th in scoring defense, allowing 41.1 points per game.

Inside linebacker won't be an issue for the Bobcats as they are returning their top two tacklers from a year ago, London and Gabe Loyd (102 tackles). The defensive line and backfield were problematic for the Bobcats, forcing London and Loyd to clean up a lot of missed assignments, hence the high tackling numbers.

Running a 3-4 base defense, the Bobcats were undersized along the line, especially at nose tackle. In the spring, they moved sophomore Jordan Mittie back and forth from end to tackle. Mittie is expected to stay at end when junior college transfer Sami Awad and freshman Gjemar Daniels join the team this summer. Junior Ishmael Davis and sophomore Dean Taylor were the primary ends this spring.

The defensive backfield lost some starters, with safety Javante O'Roy graduating and corner Brandon McDowell departing with one year of eligibility remaining. Junior A.J. Krawczyk moved to safety from wide receiver and ran with the first team in the spring along with senior Quinn Tiggs. Sophomores Anthony J. Taylor and JaShon Waddy emerged as starters at corner in the spring but will have competition when freshman Kieston Roach joins the team.

SPECIALISTS With McDowell's departure, there is a vacancy at kick returner. Watts and Morbley split time fielding punts in the spring, but freshman corner Kordell Rodgers is also expected to get into the mix. Texas State lost its primary punter (Lumi Kaba graduated) so Marcus Ripley and James Sherman split all the kicking duties this spring, with Ripley on punts and Sherman handling field goals.

FINAL ANALYSIS After a tumultuous 2–10 season, the worst by the Bobcats since going 0–8 in 1938, things should only get better in head coach Everett Withers' second season. A winning record would be a major stretch in 2017, but with improvements to both lines and a new quarterback with experience in the SEC, they should be a little bit more competitive in the Sun Belt Conference.



BRYAN LONDON

"I felt like they had a good plan on both sides of the ball, so in Year 2 and Year 3 (under Everett Withers), they should start improving a lot."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	3	**Elijah King (Sr.)**	11	**Eric Luna (Sr.)**
WR	13	**Tyler Watts (Jr.)**	17	T.V. Williams (Jr.)
WR	22	Thurman Morbley (So.)	10	Mason Hays (Jr.)
LT	67	**Tryston Mizerak (Jr.)**	64	Cedric Gambrell (Jr.)
LG	73	Jaquel Pierce (Fr.)	79	Charlie Vatterott (So.)
C	55	**Aaron Brewer (So.)**	61	Jacob Fryrear (Fr.)
RG	51	Josiah Washington (Fr.)	78	Kregg Lemons (So.)
RT		Anthony Mayes, Jr. (Jr.)	72	Jacob Rowland (So.)
TE	32	**Gabe Schrade (Sr.)**	82	Brandon Rushing (So.)
QB	12	Damian Williams (Sr.)		Jaylen Gipson (Fr.)
RB	25	Anthony D. Taylor (So.)	26	**Stedman Mayberry (Jr.)**

DEFENSE (5)

DE	94	Dean Taylor (So.)	51	**Jordan Mittie (So.)**
NT		Sami Awad (Jr.)		Gjemar Daniels (Fr.)
DE	42	**Ishmael Davis (Jr.)**	41	Jeff Banks (Sr.)
OLB	58	Hal Vinson (So.)	7	Kumonde Hines (So.)
ILB	55	**Bryan London (So.)**	30	Nikolas Daniels (So.)
ILB	2	**Gabe Loyd (Sr.)**	12	Clifton Lewis (So.)
OLB	18	**Frankie Griffin (Jr.)**	22	Markeveon Coleman (Fr.)
CB	28	Anthony J. Taylor (So.)	19	Jordan Eastling (So.)
CB	16	JaShon Waddy (So.)		Kieston Roach (Fr.)
SS	4	Quinn Tiggs (Sr.)		Preston Dimery (Fr.)
FS	47	A. J. Krawczyk (Jr.)	20	Stephan Johnson (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	James Sherman (Jr.)	KR	Kordell Rodgers (Fr.)
P	16	Marcus Ripley (So.)	PR	13 Tyler Watts (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Connor White, 44-23-223-2, 1 TD
Rushing: Stedman Mayberry, 157 att., 593 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Tyler Watts, 43 rec., 364 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Bryan London, 141
Sacks: Gabe Loyd, 2.0
Interceptions: Stan Kanu, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Everett Withers
Record at School: 2-10 (1 year)
Career Record: 27-23 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinators: Parker Fleming, Zak Kuhr
Defensive Coordinator: Randall McCray
San Marcos, TX • Bobcat Stadium (30,000)

Kelley Spencer

TROY TROJANS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **68** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **2** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-3, 7-1 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept.	2	at Boise State
Sept.	9	Alabama State
Sept.	16	at New Mexico State
Sept.	23	Akron
Sept.	30	at LSU
Oct.	11	South Alabama
Oct.	21	at Georgia State
Oct.	28	Georgia Southern
Nov.	2	Idaho
Nov.	11	at Coastal Carolina
Nov.	25	Texas State
Dec.	2	at Arkansas State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 6-2 SUN BELT

Sept.	3	Austin Peay	W	57-17
Sept.	10	at Clemson	L	24-30
Sept.	17	at Southern Miss	W	37-31
Sept.	24	New Mexico State	W	52-6
Oct.	1	at Idaho	W	34-13
Oct.	15	Georgia State	W	31-21
Oct.	20	at South Alabama	W	28-21
Nov.	5	Massachusetts	W	52-31
Nov.	12	Appalachian State	W	28-24
Nov.	17	Arkansas State	L	3-35
Nov.	26	at Texas State	W	40-7
Dec.	3	at Georgia Southern	L	24-28
Dec.	23	vs. Ohio #	W	28-23

#Dollar General Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Rasool Clemons, DE, Aiken, SC*
2. Travon Mathis, DL, Lanett, AL
3. Kevin Nixon, LB, Fort Valley, GA
4. Marcus Jones, CB, Enterprise, AL
5. Luke Whittemore, WR, Gainesville, FL
6. Damion Willis, WR, Meridian, MS*
7. Terence Dunlap, ATH, Maplesville, AL
8. Travius Harris, OL, Tallahassee, FL
9. Shon Spralling, CB, Huntsville, AL
10. Kyte Nixon, DB, Fort Valley, GA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.7 ppg	1	39
Rushing	169.2 ypg	6	73
Passing	260.5 ypg	1	37
Total	429.6 ypg	2	53
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.1 ppg	3	21
Rushing	120.2 ypg	1	17
Passing	246.4 ypg	7	85
Total	366.5 ypg	3	35
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
+10	+0.77	2	12

STAT CORNER

+8

Troy's field position margin improved by eight yards per drive. The Trojans were sixth in both first-down defense and forced three-and-outs.

OFFENSE Troy led the Sun Belt in scoring in 2016, with most of the damage coming from the right arm of quarterback Brandon Silvers. Although his overall stat line hardly budged from 2015 — his pass efficiency rating dipped slightly, in fact — Silvers was notably more consistent last year, posting a rating of 140 or better in seven games despite topping 300 passing yards just twice. Sun Belt coaches rewarded him with a first-team all-conference nod, an honor he'll be favored to repeat as a senior.

The same goes for fellow seniors Jordan Chunn and Emanuel Thompson, first-team All-SBC picks at running back and wide receiver, respectively, as well as second-teamer Deondre Douglas, who (along with Thompson) will headline a fully intact receiving corps. The backfield depth is enviable, too: Memphis transfer Jamarius Henderson adds one more option to the stable behind Chunn, but only if he can crack a rotation that returns seniors Josh Anderson and sophomores B.J. Smith and Jabir Frye.

That's hardly the case up front, though, where the list of candidates to replace three departed starters doesn't run nearly as deep. The most glaring vacancy is at left tackle, an afterthought for the past three years thanks to the reliable presence of Antonio Garcia; this year, the blind-side role will fall to sophomore Kirk Kelley or senior Johnathan Boring.

DEFENSE The defense wasn't as decorated, but it more than held up its end of the bargain: The Trojans led the Sun Belt in rushing defense and takeaways, and also managed to hold Deshaun Watson to his worst statistical performance of the season in an early upset bid at Clemson. The most notable departure from that unit was edge rusher Rashad Dillard, the SBC Defensive Player of the Year, but otherwise the front seven returns six players who started at least one game. The less familiar faces this spring included two of the most touted athletes on the roster, junior college transfer Rasool Clemons and sophomore Zo Bridges, the early favorite to replace Dillard's pass-rushing production at Bandit.

The secondary is mostly intact as well, led by Auburn transfer Kamryn Melton at one corner and returning safeties Kris Weatherspoon and Cedarius Rookard. An intriguing possibility opposite Melton is junior Blace Brown, a former walk-on who a) shares bloodlines with Herschel Walker, a cousin; and b) tied for the SBC lead last year with six interceptions after converting from wide receiver.

SPECIALISTS Out is Ryan Kay, who handled every punt and field goal attempt in 2016; in are redshirt freshman Tyler Sumpter, the presumptive replacement at punter, and junior Bratcher Underwood, who hopes to add placekicking duties to his regular gig on kickoffs. Frye was an All-SBC pick as a kick returner as a true freshman.

FINAL ANALYSIS It was a banner year for Troy, marking both its first 10-win season as an FBS program and its first-ever appearance in the AP Top 25. Given that Troy hadn't enjoyed a winning season since 2010, it also confirmed coach Neal Brown as an up-and-comer in just his second year on the job.

On the other hand, letting the Sun Belt title slip from their grasp after a 5–0 start in conference play felt like a missed opportunity, one that may not come around again for a while once this senior class — and quite possibly its head coach — moves on next year. All the pieces are in place for the Trojans to finish what they started, including a forgiving SBC schedule that omits the league's other preseason frontrunner, Appalachian State. If it all comes together, 2017 could be as good as Troy football gets.



BRANDON SILVERS

"I think it's all about their quarterback. If he's on, he's really good. If he's not, they're average, but he's a talented kid with good pieces around him."
– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	8	**Emanuel Thompson (Sr.)**	84	Sidney Davis (Jr.)
WR	80	**Deondre Douglas (Jr.)**	11	**Tevaris McCormick (Sr.)**
WR	2	**John Johnson (Sr.)**	15	Andre Flakes (Sr.)
LT	78	Kirk Kelley (So.)	70	Zach Branner (So.)
LG	67	**Steven Rowzee (Sr.)**		Travius Harris (Fr.)
C	57	**Deontae Crumitie (Jr.)**	69	J.L. Gaston (So.)
RG	54	Tristan Crowder (So.)	65	Dylan Bradshaw (Fr.)
RT	62	Johnathan Boring (Sr.)	75	James Peach (So.)
TE	42	**Gabe Hill (Jr.)**	17	Sam Letton (So.)
QB	12	**Brandon Silvers (Sr.)**	3	Sawyer Smith (So.)
RB	38	**Jordan Chunn (Sr.)**	33	Josh Anderson (Sr.)

DEFENSE (6)

DE	94	Seth Calloway (Sr.)	48	Marcus Webb (So.)
DT	30	**Jamal Stadom (Sr.)**	40	Antione Barker (So.)
DT	97	**Baron Poole II (Sr.)**	90	Trevon Sanders (Jr.)
DE	52	Rasool Clemons (So.)	91	Kelvin Lucky (Fr.)
LB	5	Sam Lebbie (Sr.)	29	Tron Folsom (So.)
LB	50	Zo Bridges (So.)	35	Doug Salter (So.)
NB	10	**Tyquae Russell (Sr.)**	31	A.J. Smiley (So.)
CB	4	**Kamryn Melton (Sr.)**	6	Jawon McDowell (So.)
CB	18	Blace Brown (Jr.)	9	Jalen Harris (Sr.)
SS	3	**Kris Weatherspoon (Sr.)**	12	Melvin Tyus (So.)
FS	24	**Cedarius Rookard (Jr.)**	21	Justin Wyatt (Sr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Bratcher Underwood (Jr.)	KR	5	Jabir Frye (So.)
P	98	Tyler Sumpter (Fr.)	PR	24	Cedarius Rookard (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brandon Silvers, 460-293-3,180-12, 23 TDs
Rushing: Jordan Chunn, 279 att., 1,288 yds., 16 TDs
Receiving: Emanuel Thompson, 80 rec., 820 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Cedarius Rookard, 52; Kris Weatherspoon, 52
Sacks: Baron Poole II, 3.5
Interceptions: Blace Brown, 6

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Neal Brown
Record at School: 14-11 (2 years)
Career Record: 14-11 (2 years)
Co-Offensive Coordinators: Kenny Edenfield, Matt Moore
Defensive Coordinator: Vic Koenning
Troy, AL • Veterans Memorial Stadium (30,406)

AP

ULM WARHAWKS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **119** • SUN BELT PREDICTION: **8** • PROJECTED RECORD: **4-8, 4-4 SUN BELT**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	at Memphis
Sept.	9	at Florida State
Sept.	16	Southern Miss
Sept.	23	at UL Lafayette
Sept.	30	Coastal Carolina
Oct.	7	at Texas State
Oct.	14	Georgia State
Oct.	21	at South Alabama
Oct.	28	at Idaho
Nov.	4	Appalachian State
Nov.	18	at Auburn
Nov.	25	Arkansas State

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 SUN BELT

Sept.	3	Southern	W	38-21
Sept.	10	at Oklahoma	L	17-59
Sept.	17	at Georgia Southern	L	21-23
Oct.	1	at Auburn	L	7-58
Oct.	8	Idaho	L	31-34
Oct.	15	Texas State	W	40-34
Oct.	22	at New Mexico	L	17-59
Oct.	29	at Arkansas State	L	10-51
Nov.	5	South Alabama	W	42-35
Nov.	12	at Georgia State	W	37-23
Nov.	19	at Appalachian State	L	17-42
Dec.	3	Louisiana	L	3-30

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Corey Straughter, CB, Monroe, LA
2. J.J. Dallas, CB, San Diego, CA*
3. Jakyle Holmes, ATH, Hammond, LA
4. Rashaad Harding, LB, Lafayette, LA
5. Javin Myers, RB, Baton Rouge, LA
6. Joquarius Savage, OL, Monroe, LA*
7. Austin Hawley, S, Gladewater, TX
8. Zachari Jackson, WR, Grand Prairie, TX
9. Tralon Thomas, LB, Ville Platte, LA
10. Traveion Webster, S, Longview, TX

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SUN BELT	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.3 ppg	9	110
Rushing	181.3 ypg	3	57
Passing	192.0 ypg	8	99
Total	373.3 ypg	8	100
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	39.1 ppg	10	122
Rushing	260.3 ypg	11	125
Passing	220.1 ypg	5	55
Total	480.3 ypg	10	119
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SUN BELT**	**NATIONAL**
-11	-0.92	10	122

STAT CORNER

+7.7

ULM's field position margin improved by 7.7 yards per drive. It helped to double the Warhawks' wins despite per-play regression.

OFFENSE ULM had too many moving parts last season. There were three different starting quarterbacks, four starting running backs and eight starting wide receivers. The good news is that 10 of those 15 starters at skill positions are back. The bad news is that they still carry several concerns about inconsistency.

The Warhawks rushed for 181.3 yards per game, third best in the Sun Belt. Both an experienced offensive line and a crowded backfield return. Ben Luckett, Thomas Koufie, Austin Vaughn and Duke Carter each posted 100-yard rushing games, but none reached 500 yards for the season. Finding a primary ball carrier could help the offense's stability.

Quarterback Garrett Smith, a two-year starter, is the frontrunner in a three-man race after missing the second half of last season with an injury. He must stay healthy and limit ULM's unforced errors — the team had the second-most turnovers in the Sun Belt in 2016.

At wide receiver, Marcus Green is somewhat consistent, and Xavier Brown and RJ Turner have big-play potential. But the passing attack must improve to complement a ground game that carries some optimism.

DEFENSE Just as much experience returns on defense, but the concerns are greater. Eight positions tout a player with at least six starts last season, but that unit was among the worst in FBS in rushing defense (260.3 ypg), total defense (480.3 ypg) and scoring defense (39.1 ppg). To improve on those numbers, the Warhawks need their veterans to come of age and the defense to better adapt to the 4-2-5 scheme, which was implemented last season.

There are strong points in the front seven, but the group struggled mightily to stop the run last season. Senior Caleb Tucker is a havoc-wreaking defensive end up front. David Griffith is the leader of the linebackers after posting a team-high 78 tackles, including 12 for a loss. And he's flanked by fellow linebackers Chase Day (70 tackles) and Cortez Sisco (60), both very productive as freshmen last season.

There is some experience in the secondary. But the pass defense made few big plays last season and struggled only slightly less than the rush defense.

SPECIALISTS Craig Ford was a perfect 7-of-7 on field goals of 40 yards or less, and he still has good range beyond that. Alex Prince should take over the punting duties. Markis McCray and Green are a solid kick return duo, as each had a return of at least 50 yards in 2016.

FINAL ANALYSIS Coach Matt Viator inherited a 2–11 ULM team and made it somewhat respectable in Year 1 with a 4–8 record and one of the least penalized teams in the country. But it was also his first losing record in 11 seasons as a head coach after previously guiding McNeese State to a spot among the elite in FCS. ULM's road to a better record is clear. It must cut down on turnovers and win the line of scrimmage.

Only six teams had a worse turnover margin than ULM last season at minus-11, and those miscues were a big factor in the Warhawks' 1–6 road record. Viator is trying to build a deep power-rushing attack like the ones he had at McNeese State, but he has bigger problems on defense trying to stop the run. Developing a physical style will require time and recruiting, and keeping Smith healthy should accelerate the offense's growth.

ULM's schedule includes only five home games, no bye week until November and non-conference road trips to Florida State, Auburn and Memphis. Even if the Warhawks are improved in Viator's second season, the record may not show it.



GARRETT SMITH

"Matt (Viator) is a good coach, so I expect them to be better in Year 2. I just don't have a great feel for their personnel."

– An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	17	**Xavier Brown (Jr.)**	4	Brandius Batiste (Fr.)	
WR	3	Marcus Green (Jr.)	12	Markis McCray (Jr.)	
WR	2	RJ Turner (Jr.)	1	Brian Williams (Sr.)	
LT	77	Trace Ellison (So.)	74	Joquarius Savage (Jr.)	
LG	75	**Frank Sutton (Jr.)**	66	Ben Moye (So.)	
C	56	Bobby Reynolds (So.)	71	Noah Ramsey (Fr.)	
RG	68	T.J. Fiailoa (Fr.)	73	**Devin Jackson Jr. (So.)**	
RT	64	**Eastwood Thomas (So.)**	72	Samuel Williams (Fr.)	
TE	85	Reagan Heddins (So.)	86	Josh Pederson (So.)	
QB	13	**Garrett Smith (Jr.)**	6	Caleb Evans (So.)	
RB	33	Austin Vaughn (So.)	24	**Ben Luckett (Jr.)**	

DEFENSE (8)

DE	8	**Caleb Tucker (Sr.)**	97	Kerry Starks (Fr.)
NT	94	Tyler Johnson (Jr.)	93	Mason Husmann (So.)
DT	90	**Jaylen Veasley (So.)**	45	**Shaquille Warren (Jr.)**
DE	58	Donald Louis (So.)	44	Ty Shelby (So.)
LB	14	**David Griffith (Jr.)**	7	Cortez Sisco (So.)
LB	32	**Chase Day (So.)**	5	Jarred Dunn (Sr.)
CB	1	**Juwan Offray (Sr.)**	41	Semaj Franklin (Fr.)
CB	12	Jarell Brown (Jr.)	39	Jared Doyle (Fr.)
DB	29	Logan Latin (So.)	4	Collin Turner (Jr.)
SS	6	**Wesley Thompson (Jr.)**	34	Luke Hedrick (So.)
FS	23	Nick Ingram (So.)	9	**Marcus Hubbard (Jr.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	16	Craig Ford (Jr.)	KR	12	Markis McCray (Jr.)
P	63	Alex Prince (So.)	PR	3	Marcus Green (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Garrett Smith, 179-103-1,237-7, 9 TDs
Rushing: Ben Luckett, 120 att., 450 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Marcus Green, 36 rec., 344 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: David Griffith, 78
Sacks: David Griffith, 3.0
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Matt Viator
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 82-41 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Matt Kubik
Defensive Coordinator: Mike Collins
Monroe, LA • Malone Stadium (30,427)

AP Photo/ Hal Yeager

ARMY WEST POINT BLACK KNIGHTS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **80** • PROJECTED RECORD: **7-5**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Fordham	
Sept. 9	Buffalo	
Sept. 16	at Ohio State	
Sept. 23	at Tulane	
Sept. 30	UTEP	
Oct. 7	at Rice	
Oct. 14	Eastern Michigan	
Oct. 21	Temple	
Nov. 4	at Air Force	
Nov. 11	Duke	
Nov. 18	at North Texas	
Dec. 9	vs. Navy #	

#Philadelphia, PA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 8-5

Sept. 2	at Temple		W	28-13
Sept. 10	Rice		W	31-14
Sept. 17	at UTEP		W	66-14
Sept. 24	at Buffalo	(ot)	L	20-23
Oct. 8	at Duke		L	6-13
Oct. 15	Lafayette		W	62-7
Oct. 22	North Texas		L	18-35
Oct. 29	at Wake Forest		W	21-13
Nov. 5	Air Force		L	12-31
Nov. 12	vs. Notre Dame #		L	6-44
Nov. 19	Morgan State		W	60-3
Dec. 10	vs. Navy %		W	21-17
Dec. 27	vs. North Texas &	(ot)	W	38-31

#San Antonio %Baltimore &Heart Of Dallas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Christian Anderson, QB, Bronx, NY
2. Ryan O'Malley, DT, Libertyville, IL
3. Trevor Gear, RB, McDonough, GA
4. Dallas Blacklock Jr., CB, Houston, TX
5. Ethan Harvey, OG, Shreveport, LA
6. Troy Porche, DT, Houston, TX
7. Caden Williams, OT, Franklin, TN
8. Jeremiah Lowery, ILB, Elmore, AL
9. Dean Powell, OG, Buford, GA
10. Daniel Charles, S, Smyrna, GA

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.9 ppg	59
Rushing	339.5 ypg	2
Passing	74.4 ypg	128
Total	413.9 ypg	65
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	19.8 ppg	16
Rushing	121.2 ypg	18
Passing	170.2 ypg	6
Total	291.5 ypg	4
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.23	84

STAT CORNER

9.2

Army averaged 9.2 rushes per game of 10-plus yards, second in FBS and a massive improvement over 2015's average of 6.4.

OFFENSE A triple-option attack that ranked second in the nation in rushing last season (339.5 ypg) returns its top five ball carriers. The group is led by junior fullback Andy Davidson, who made the move from linebacker following his freshman season and ran for 961 yards and 12 touchdowns. Another junior fullback, Darnell Woolfolk, capped a 600-yard season with a career-high 119 in the bowl victory over North Texas. Sophomore Malik McGue, a jack of all trades last season who even served as the No. 3 quarterback, impressed at slot back during the spring.

Ahmad Bradshaw is expected to be under center again. The senior started all but one game last season and was second on the team in rushing with 824 yards. He often struggled through the air, throwing nine interceptions in 91 attempts. Junior Chris Carter, who has three career starts, and sophomore Kelvin Hopkins could push Bradshaw. Junior Christian Poe is the leading returning receiver.

The line could feature four senior starters, including Bryce Holland and Brett Toth. The former sat out the 2015 season due to injury and returned to start every game at center. Toth took over at right tackle a year ago and may be the Black Knights' best lineman.

DEFENSE With standout inside linebackers Andrew King and Jeremy Timpf gone from a unit that ranked fourth nationally in total defense, the spring marked an opportunity for senior Scott Washle and junior James Nachtigal to take ownership in the middle.

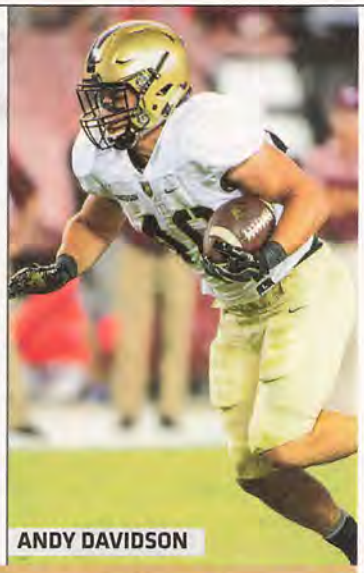
Outside linebacker Alex Aukerman is the leading returning tackler and paced the Black Knights with 7.5 sacks and 15.0 tackles for a loss last season. The other outside spot is manned by junior Kenneth Brinson, who juggles track (discus) and football at West Point. Senior end John Voit will be a third-year starter.

Sophomore corner Elijah Riley started the final 11 games and led the team with three interceptions after taking over for Brandon Jackson, who was killed in an early season automobile accident. Corner Marcus Hyatt was felled by a knee injury at Wake Forest and missed the spring. Coach Todd Monken expects the junior to be ready for fall camp. Safety Rhyan England has a 24 career starts.

SPECIALISTS While the team has shown marked improvement overall in Monken's three seasons at West Point, special teams continue to lag, and it may be the beginning of the season before some pieces fall into place. That is especially the case with the kicking specialists, where sophomore John Abercrombie, known for his accuracy, is in the mix after the team's 6-for-12 showing on field goals. Three punters, including receiver Jermaine Adams, combined to place last nationally (35.1-yard average) a year ago. A kick return unit that ranked 124th (16.9-yard average) lacks a player with as many as three career returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS An emotional season that included the tragic loss of Jackson and a euphoric win over Navy, the Black Knights' first over their chief rival since 2001, will not soon be forgotten. Despite winning the program's most games in 20 years, Monken feels that more could have been accomplished. "We probably didn't play up to our potential (last year)," he says. "So that is our challenge each week, and if we can do that I am confident we can win more games than we did last year."

Even with key losses on defense, there is enough of a veteran playmaking presence for the unit to remain formidable. Combine that with a wealth of returning ball carriers and offensive linemen, and the Black Knights appear in position to put together back-to-back winning seasons for the first time since 1989-90.



ANDY DAVIDSON

"The bowl was great, but beating Navy is more important than anything else. (Jeff) Monken has done at West Point."

– An opposing assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	81	**Jeff Ejekam (Sr.)**	80	Glen Coates (So.)
WR	87	Christian Poe (Jr.)	84	Jermaine Adams (Sr.)
LT	62	**Rick Kurz (Jr.)**	53	Jeff Panara (Jr.)
LG	66	Josh Boylan (Sr.)	73	Jaxson Deaton (So.)
C	65	**Bryce Holland (Sr.)**	54	Josh Rea (Jr.)
RG	70	**Mike Houghton (Sr.)**	59	Mike Johnson (So.)
RT	78	**Brett Toth (Sr.)**	76	Tim Gant (Jr.)
QB	17	**Ahmad Bradshaw (Sr.)**	7	Chris Carter (Jr.)
SB	3	**Jordan Asberry (Jr.)**	16	Malik McGue (So.)
SB	32	Kell Walker (So.)	6	John Trainor (Sr.)
FB	40	**Andy Davidson (Jr.)**	33	Darnell Woolfolk (Jr.)

DEFENSE (7)

DE	59	**John Voit (Sr.)**	97	Amadeo West (So.)
NG	58	**Andrew McLean (Sr.)**	99	Cordarrell Davis (Jr.)
DE	77	Raymond Wright (Jr.)	91	Wunmi Oyetuga (Jr.)
OLB	56	**Kenneth Brinson (Jr.)**	50	Bayle Wolf (Sr.)
ILB	19	James Nachtigal (Jr.)	15	Ryan Parker (So)
ILB	36	Scott Washle (Sr.)	54	Cole Christiansen (So.)
OLB	21	**Alex Aukerman (Sr.)**	18	Jake Ellington (So.)
CB	23	**Elijah Riley (So.)**	14	Jalen Sharp (Jr.)
CB	1	**Marcus Hyatt (Jr.)**	7	Jaylon McClinton (So.)
S	2	Gibby Gibson (Jr.)	38	Cameron Jones (So.)
S	20	**Rhyan England (Sr.)**	4	Max Regan (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	18	Blake Wilson (Sr.)	KR	1	Marcus Hyatt (Jr.)
P	98	J.D. Mote (Jr.)	PR	16	Malik McGue (So.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Ahmad Bradshaw, 91-40-703-9, 4 TDs
Rushing: Andy Davidson, 190 att., 961 yds., 12 TDs
Receiving: Christian Poe, 10 rec., 133 yds, 0 TDs
Tackles: Alex Aukerman, 59
Sacks: Alex Aukerman, 7.5
Interceptions: Elijah Riley, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jeff Monken
Record at School: 14-23 (3 years)
Career Record: 52-39 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brent Davis
Defensive Coordinator: Jay Bateman
West Point, NY • Michie Stadium (38,000)

AP

BYU COUGARS

NATIONAL FORECAST: **39** • PROJECTED RECORD: **9-4**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26	Portland State	
Sept. 2	vs. LSU #	
Sept. 9	Utah	
Sept. 16	Wisconsin	
Sept. 29	at Utah State	
Oct. 6	Boise State	
Oct. 14	at Mississippi State	
Oct. 21	at East Carolina	
Oct. 28	San Jose State	
Nov. 4	at Fresno State	
Nov. 10	at UNLV	
Nov. 18	Massachusetts	
Nov. 25	at Hawaii	#Houston, TX

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 9-4

Sept. 3	vs. Arizona #	W	18-16
Sept. 10	at Utah	L	19-20
Sept. 17	UCLA	L	14-17
Sept. 24	vs. West Virginia %	L	32-35
Sept. 30	Toledo	W	55-53
Oct. 8	at Michigan State	W	31-14
Oct. 14	Mississippi State (ot)	W	28-21
Oct. 20	at Boise State	L	27-28
Nov. 5	at Cincinnati	W	20-3
Nov. 12	Southern Utah	W	37-7
Nov. 19	Massachusetts	W	51-9
Nov. 26	Utah State	W	28-10
Dec. 21	vs. Wyoming &	W	24-21

#Glendale %Landover &Poinsettia Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Chaz Ah You, DB, Eagle Mountain, UT
2. Langi Tuifua, DL, South Jordan, UT
3. Alden Tofa, DL, West Jordan UT
4. Jackson McChesney, RB, Highland, UT
5. Taipe Vaka, OL, Oakland, CA*
6. Ben Bywater, LB, Salt Lake City, UT
7. D'Angelo Gunter, DB, San Diego, CA
8. Bentley Hanshaw, TE, Moorpark, CA
9. Isaac Rex, TE, San Clemente, CA
10. Seleti Fevaleaki, DL, Corona, CA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.5 ppg	62
Rushing	201.2 ypg	41
Passing	197.9 ypg	96
Total	399.1 ypg	71
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	19.5 ppg	14
Rushing	112.8 ypg	9
Passing	252.2 ypg	96
Total	365.0 ypg	34
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
+12	+0.92	7

STAT CORNER

+7.9

BYU's field position margin improved by 7.9 yards per drive, which helped BYU win nine games (again) despite a per-play deficit.

OFFENSE In ordinary circumstances, BYU quarterback Tanner Mangum's 2015 and 2016 seasons would have been reversed. He logically would have played behind Taysom Hill as a freshman, then taken over the starting job as a sophomore. Instead, Mangum started 12 games as a freshman after Hill was lost for the season with an injury in the opening game, and then Hill returned last season. Mangum's only start came in the Poinsettia Bowl after Hill was injured again.

The positive aspect of his career arc is that Mangum was able to watch and learn for a year in offensive coordinator Ty Detmer's system, and he will be protected by a more experienced line in 2017. Mangum passed for 3,377 yards and 23 touchdowns as a freshman and is a classic drop-back passer in the BYU tradition.

With the loss of career rushing leader Jamaal Williams, the Cougars will rely on several running backs. Squally Canada should get his shot after running for 315 yards in relief of Williams. KJ Hall showed some flashes of speed late in the season as a runner and receiver.

The Cougars must replace their top three receivers, so the re-stocking of the passing game features the tight end, a key element of Detmer's own quarterbacking era. To accelerate the process, Detmer moved Moroni Laulu-Pututau, who had 27 receptions last season, from receiver to tight end. Jonah Trinnaman is the top returning receiver, having caught 28 passes as a junior college transfer.

Four offensive line starters return, with Thomas Shoaf moving from right tackle to left tackle.

DEFENSE Defensive coordinator Ilaisa Tuiaki has given himself a more difficult job in 2017. Tuiaki is taking over the defensive line, switching roles with coach Steve Kaufusi, who as the new linebackers coach inherits some of the team's best players at any position.

Tuiaki must replace three starters on the line, and he likes Trajan Pili's development. At linebacker, Fred Warner, Butch Pau'u and Francis Bernard produced nearly identical statistics last season as the team's top three tacklers.

The Cougars will miss safety Kai Nacua, who led the team with six interceptions last season and picked off 14 passes in three years. Aside from games against Toledo and Boise State, BYU played consistently in the secondary and should improve in 2017. Dayan Ghanwoloku and Troy Warner, Fred's younger brother, are capable cornerbacks, and Micah Hannemann is a solid safety.

SPECIALISTS In the first half of the season, BYU won two games with field goals on the final play — by two different kickers. Rhett Almond delivered the game-winner vs. Toledo and finished with 17 field goals in 21 attempts. Jonny Linehan's 2016 season is best remembered for his failed effort on a fake punt, when the Cougars faced fourth-and-19 from their 5-yard line at Boise State and he barely made it out of the end zone. As a rugby-style punter, though, Linehan was effective. He averaged 42.5 yards, and the longest return for any opponent was nine yards.

FINAL ANALYSIS BYU coach Kalani Sitake's first season was an adventure. In addition to those two last-play wins, BYU lost four games by a total of eight points.

The Cougars should have more close games in 2017 as they tackle another ambitious, front-loaded schedule in the program's seventh season of independence. BYU will meet LSU, Utah, Wisconsin, Boise State and Mississippi State by mid-October, so Mangum and his offense will have to be sharp from the start. The season likely will play out much like 2016, when the Cougars won their last five games to finish 9–4.



TANNER MANGUM

"(Quarterback) Tanner Mangum coming back is like having a returning starter even though they lost Taysom Hill."

– An opposing assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	3	**Jonah Trinnaman (Sr.)**	1	Akile Davis (So.)	
WR	21	Talon Shumway (So.)	19	Micah Simon (So.)	
LT	59	**Thomas Shoaf (So.)**	65	JJ Nwigwe (Jr.)	
LG	76	**Keyan Norman (Sr.)**	58	Austin Chambers (Fr.)	
C	56	**Tejan Koroma (Sr.)**	76	Keyan Norman (Sr.)	
RG	78	**Tuni Kanuch (Sr.)**	71	Austin Hoyt (Jr.)	
RT	71	Austin Hoyt (Jr.)	74	Kieffer Longson (Fr.)	
TE	88	**Tanner Balderree (Sr.)**	17	Moroni Laulu-Pututau (Jr.)	
QB	12	Tanner Mangum (Jr.)	7	Beau Hoge (So.)	
RB	22	Squally Canada (Jr.)	5	Ula Tolutau (Fr.)	
FB	35	Brayden El-Bakri (Jr.)	46	Creed Richardson (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	90	Corbin Kaufusi (Jr.)	49	Moses Kaumatule (Jr.)	
NG	50	Tevita Mo'unga (Jr.)	92	Handsome Tanielu (Sr.)	
DT	94	Kesni Tausinga (Sr.)	**54**	**Merrill Taliauli (Jr.)**	
DE	52	Trajan Pili (So.)	46	Rhett Sandlin (Jr.)	
OLB	4	**Fred Warner (Sr.)**	55	Morgan Unga (Jr.)	
MLB	38	**Butch Pau'u (Jr.)**	42	Johnny Tapusoa (So.)	
OLB	13	**Francis Bernard (Jr.)**	53	Isaiah Kaufusi (Fr.)	
CB	5	**Dayan Ghanwoloku (So.)**	3	Isaiah Armstrong (Jr.)	
CB	11	**Troy Warner (So.)**	32	Chris Wilcox (So.)	
FS	36	Zayne Anderson (Jr.)	25	Tanner Jacobson (Jr.)	
SS	7	**Micah Hannemann (Sr.)**	25	Tanner Jacobson (Jr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	26	Rhett Almond (Jr.)	KR	3	Jonah Trinnaman (Sr.)
P	31	Jonny Linehan (Sr.)	PR	7	Micah Hannemann (Sr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tanner Mangum, 33-22-241-1, 3 TDs
Rushing: Squally Canada, 74 att., 315 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Jonah Trinnaman, 28 rec., 321 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Fred Warner, 86
Sacks: Corbin Kaufusi, 2.5; Moses Kaumatule, 2.5
Interceptions: Fred Warner, 3; Francis Bernard, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Kalani Sitake
Record at School: 9-4 (1 year)
Career Record: 9-4 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Ty Detmer
Defensive Coordinator: Ilaisa Tuiaki
Provo, UT • LaVell Edwards Stadium (63,470)

Bruce Schwartzman

NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

NATIONAL FORECAST: **20** • PROJECTED RECORD: **8-4**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	Temple	
Sept. 9	Georgia	
Sept. 16	at Boston College	
Sept. 23	at Michigan State	
Sept. 30	Miami (Ohio)	
Oct. 7	at North Carolina	
Oct. 21	USC	
Oct. 28	NC State	
Nov. 4	Wake Forest	
Nov. 11	at Miami (Fla.)	
Nov. 18	Navy	
Nov. 25	at Stanford	

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8

Sept. 4	at Texas	(ot)	L	47-50
Sept. 10	Nevada		W	39-10
Sept. 17	Michigan State		L	28-36
Sept. 24	Duke		L	35-38
Oct. 1	vs. Syracuse #		W	50-33
Oct. 8	at NC State		L	3-10
Oct. 15	Stanford		L	10-17
Oct. 29	Miami		W	30-27
Nov. 5	vs. Navy %		L	27-28
Nov. 12	vs. Army &		W	44-6
Nov. 19	Virginia Tech		L	31-34
Nov. 26	at USC		L	27-45

#East Rutherford %Jacksonville &San Antonio

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Brock Wright, TE, Cypress, TX
2. Robert Hainsey, OL, Pittsburgh, PA
3. Cole Kmet, TE, Lake Barrington, IL
4. Joshua Lugg, OL, Pittsburgh, PA
5. Darnell Ewell, DL, Norfolk, VA
6. Aaron Banks, OL, Alameda, CA
7. C.J. Holmes, RB, Hamden, CT
8. David Adams, LB, Pittsburgh, PA
9. Avery Davis, QB, Cedar Hill, TX
10. Isaiah Robertson, S, Bolingbrook, IL

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.9 ppg	53
Rushing	163.3 ypg	80
Passing	254.3 ypg	48
Total	417.6 ypg	62
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.8 ppg	62
Rushing	182.4 ypg	72
Passing	196.4 ypg	21
Total	378.8 ypg	42
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
-4	-0.33	93

STAT CORNER

3.6

The Irish defense had a 3.6 percent sack rate on passing downs, 120th in FBS. Wake Forest's under Mike Elko (new Notre Dame DC): 10.6 percent (13th).

OFFENSE DeShone Kizer is gone, but sophomore Brandon Wimbush has all the physical tools and the same level of maturity his predecessor brought to the quarterback position, if not the experience.

Four starters return along the offensive line, including left tackle Mike McGlinchey and left guard Quenton Nelson. Both are expected to be among the first players at their positions off the board in the 2018 NFL Draft. Sam Mustipher should be a more consistent center this season after his first year as a starter in '16.

The Irish are loaded at running back, led by junior Josh Adams, who has rushed for 1,768 yards, 11 touchdowns and a 6.4-yard average in his first two years in the program. When healthy — he suffered a hamstring pull in the 2016 preseason and wasn't up to par until November — he's a breakaway threat.

Experience at the wide receiver/tight end positions remains mostly sparse, but the talent is abundant. Equanimeous St. Brown leads the pack after a breakthrough sophomore season (58 catches, 961 yards, nine TDs). Sophomore wideout Chase Claypool, who flashed his athleticism on coverage teams, and tight end Alizé Jones, who missed the 2016 season to tend to academics, are exciting athletes with size, like St. Brown.

DEFENSE The Irish boast strong, deep linebacker and cornerback corps, but the defensive line is a real concern. The safeties are talented but young.

Among the 11 returning defensive linemen, none recorded a sack in '16, and they combined for just 5.5 tackles for a loss. Ends Daelin Hayes and Jay Hayes (no relation) offer the most promise. Veteran interior lineman Jerry Tillery has length and experience, but a skimpy stat sheet.

There's ample talent at linebacker, where senior Nyles Morgan — who paced the team in tackles (94) and sacks (four) — returns at the Mike. Senior Buck linebacker Greer Martini has length, athleticism and instincts and forms a one-two punch with Te'von Coney. Drue Tranquill moves from strong safety to the Rover (outside backer) spot and teams with promising Asmar Bilal.

The Irish are loaded at cornerback with Nick Watkins coming off an injury-filled '16 and Julian Love, who emerged as a standout true freshman. The speediest of the group is cornerback-nickel Shaun Crawford, who missed all of '15 with an ACL injury and then tore his Achilles last September.

The move of Tranquill up front leaves the safety positions without experience. Junior Nick Coleman, a converted cornerback, and sophomores Jalen Elliott and Devin Studstill will battle for minutes.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Justin Yoon and punter Tyler Newsome put up big numbers in 2015-16. Yoon is 28-of-34 on field goals, and Newsome posted 44.5- and 43.5-yard averages, respectively, the last two seasons. C.J. Sanders averaged 12.5 yards on punt returns last year and had a 25.0-yard average on kick returns, including two touchdowns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Everything was reevaluated after a 4–8 season, including the coaching staff, which features six new names and three new coordinators, as well as a new strength and conditioning coach.

The offense looks potent, even with the loss of Kizer, and the addition of 34-year-old coordinator Chip Long should provide a supplement to a play menu that needed some diversification.

The key is up front on a defense that is short of proven playmakers from end to end. The back seven looks to be a relative strength.

If defensive coordinator Mike Elko can help scheme past some of the line deficiencies, the Irish should return to the eight-to-nine-win range Brian Kelly achieved in his first six years at Notre Dame.



JOSH ADAMS

"The fallout from 2017 is now you're installing new schemes on both sides and asking the kid (quarterback Brandon Wimbush) to be a first-year savior."
– An opposing assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

WR	6	**Equanimeous St. Brown (Jr.)**	3	**C.J. Sanders (Jr.)**	
WR	83	Chase Claypool (So.)	29	Kevin Stepherson (So.)	
LT	68	**Mike McGlinchey (Sr.)**	72	Robert Hainsey (Fr.)	
LG	56	**Quenton Nelson (Jr.)**	70	Hunter Bivin (Sr.)	
C	53	**Sam Mustipher (Jr.)**	66	Tristen Hoge (So.)	
RG	71	**Alex Bars (Jr.)**	57	Trevor Ruhland (So.)	
RT	78	Tommy Kraemer (Fr.)	74	Liam Eichenberg (Fr.)	
TE	80	**Durham Smythe (Sr.)**	82	Nic Weishar (Jr.)	
TE	10	Alizé Jones (So.)	89	Brock Wright (Fr.)	
QB	7	Brandon Wimbush (So.)	12	Ian Book (Fr.)	
RB	33	**Josh Adams (Jr.)**	2	Dexter Williams (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	93	Jay Hayes (Sr.)	98	**Andrew Trumbetti (Sr.)**
NT	99	**Jerry Tillery (Jr.)**	75	Daniel Cage (Sr.)
DT	55	Jonathan Bonner (Jr.)	58	Elijah Taylor (So.)
DE	9	Daelin Hayes (So.)	42	Julian Okwara (So.)
MLB	5	**Nyles Morgan (Sr.)**	45	Jonathan Jones (Fr.)
WLB	48	Greer Martini (Sr.)	4	**Te'von Coney (Jr.)**
ROV	23	**Drue Tranquill (Jr.)**	22	Asmar Bilal (So.)
CB	20	Shaun Crawford (So.)	7	Nick Watkins (Jr.)
CB	27	**Julian Love (So.)**	35	Donte Vaughn (So.)
FS	24	Nick Coleman (Jr.)	28	Nicco Fertitta (Jr.)
SS	21	Jalen Elliott (So.)	14	**Devin Studstill (So.)**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	19	Justin Yoon (Jr.)	KR	3	C.J. Sanders (Jr.)
P	85	Tyler Newsome (Jr.)	PR	3	C.J. Sanders (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Chris Finke, 2-1-4-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Josh Adams, 158 att., 933 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Equanimeous St. Brown, 58 rec., 961 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Nyles Morgan, 94
Sacks: Nyles Morgan, 4.0
Interceptions: Five players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Brian Kelly
Record at School: 59-31 (7 years)
Career Record: 230-88-2 (26 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Chip Long
Defensive Coordinator: Mike Elko
South Bend, IN • Notre Dame Stadium (78,000)

Bruce Schwartzman

UMASS MINUTEMEN

NATIONAL FORECAST: **128** • PROJECTED RECORD: **2-10**

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26	Hawaii	
Sept. 2	at Coastal Carolina	
Sept. 9	Old Dominion	
Sept. 15	at Temple	
Sept. 23	at Tennessee	
Sept. 30	Ohio	
Oct. 14	at South Florida	
Oct. 21	Georgia Southern	
Oct. 28	Appalachian State	
Nov. 4	at Mississippi State	
Nov. 11	vs. Maine #	
Nov. 18	at BYU	

#Boston, MA

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 2-10

Sept. 3	at Florida	L	7-24
Sept. 10	vs. Boston College #	L	7-26
Sept. 17	FIU	W	21-13
Sept. 24	vs. Mississippi State #	L	35-47
Oct. 1	Tulane	L	24-31
Oct. 7	at Old Dominion	L	16-36
Oct. 15	vs. Louisiana Tech #	L	28-56
Oct. 22	at South Carolina	L	28-34
Oct. 29	Wagner	W	34-10
Nov. 5	at Troy	L	31-52
Nov. 19	at BYU	L	9-51
Nov. 26	at Hawaii	L	40-46

#Foxboro

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Chinedu Ogbonna, LB, Marietta, GA
2. Claudin Cherelus, S, Naples, FL
3. Mike Ruane, LB, Rumson, NJ
4. Brian Roberts, CB, Middleburg, FL
5. Chris Hunt, CB, Virginia Beach, VA
6. Jacoby Herring, WR, Moreno Valley, CA*
7. Tyler Hayes, S, Clarkson, TX*
8. Jessie Britt, ATH, Auburndale, FL
9. Chris DiTommaso, DL, Franklin Lakes, NJ
10. Jake Byczko, DL, Auburn, MA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	23.3 ppg	110
Rushing	99.5 ypg	124
Passing	256.7 ypg	43
Total	356.2 ypg	109
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	35.5 ppg	108
Rushing	193.1 ypg	81
Passing	259.6 ypg	106
Total	452.7 ypg	99
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
-10	-0.83	120

STAT CORNER

8.4

UMass' average third down distance was 8.4 yards, most in FBS. Andrew Ford was good on third-and-long but faced too many.

OFFENSE When tight end Adam Breneman announced he'd be returning for his senior year, expectations for the UMass offense took a little jump. Breneman, a Penn State transfer, caught 70 passes for 808 yards and eight touchdowns, all team highs. With a history of knee problems before UMass, many people thought he might enter the NFL Draft, rather than risk another injury. But he elected to stay in Amherst, keeping the program's top target on the roster.

Junior quarterback Andrew Ford, a transfer from Virginia Tech, will be happy to have him. Ford and Breneman were high school teammates in Pennsylvania, and their chemistry returned at UMass. Ford didn't win the job in camp, but he established himself as the starter in Week 3 early and finished with 2,665 passing yards and 26 touchdowns (14 interceptions) while completing 60.8 percent of throws. With a full season in the offense, Ford will try to help some young wide receivers, led by junior Andy Isabella and sophomore Sadiq Palmer, develop quickly. Isabella ranked second on the team in both receptions (62) and receiving yards (801).

If the passing attack can find success, things could open up for junior running back Marquis Young (198 carries for 898 yards, four touchdowns), who struggled at times against defenses designed to slow him down last year. He'll need to be durable behind a young offensive line as the Minutemen are thin at running back behind him.

DEFENSE UMass was looking for a new defensive coordinator after allowing 35.5 points and 452.7 yards per game last year. When Ed Pinkham, the architect of the defense that helped Western Michigan go undefeated prior to the Cotton Bowl, didn't follow coach P.J. Fleck to Minnesota, UMass coach Mark Whipple pounced.

The Broncos led the MAC in scoring defense (19.8 ppg) and ranked second in total defense (353.6 ypg). They led the league with 15 interceptions. On top of that, Whipple and Pinkham worked together as coordinators at New Hampshire early in their careers, creating a comfort factor that made the hire that much smoother.

The Minutemen will switch from a 3-4 to a 4-3 front. A veteran group of linebackers is led by inside backer Shane Huber and Tedrick Lowery, who'll play a hybrid linebacker/safety role.

Senior Da'Sean Downey moves to defensive end in the new alignment and will have an opportunity to build off of last year's team-leading 6.0 sacks.

Sophomore corner Isaiah Rodgers, who impressed last year with two interceptions and 40 tackles in eight starts (11 games overall), figures to be the top cover guy in the secondary, while Pitt transfer Patrick Amara Jr. has a chance to make an immediate impact.

SPECIALISTS In three years back in Amherst, Whipple has never made it through an entire season with just one placekicker. He goes into 2017 with Mike Caggiano and Logan Laurent, who have each won and lost the job before, so it figures to remain a concern. Rodgers showed signs of stardom as a returner in 2016 and could be poised to break out.

FINAL ANALYSIS After playing at least half of their home games at Gillette Stadium — 100 miles from campus — in their first five years in the FBS ranks, UMass will play five games in Amherst (and one at Fenway Park) in 2017. There's more good news: The Minutemen, in their second season as an FBS independent, drop from four Power 5 opponents to two. Now the bad news: Nine of the 12 teams on the schedule played in bowl games last year. With this challenging slate, UMass will have to take considerable steps to better last year's 2–10 campaign.



ANDREW FORD

"How much longer can they last as an independent? If they can't find a home soon, they should follow Idaho to FCS."

– An opposing assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

WR	23	**Andy Isabella (Jr.)**	86	Elijah Robinson (Fr.)	
WR	6	Sadiq Palmer (So.)	10	Brennon Dingle (Fr.)	
RT	58	**Jack Driscoll (So.)**	67	Dan DiNicola (Jr.)	
RG	79	**Jake Largay (Jr.)**	74	Lukas Kolter (Jr.)	
C	72	Derek Dumais (So.)	74	Lukas Kolter (Jr.)	
LG	50	Mike Yerardi (So.)	59	Larnel Coleman (Fr.)	
LT	57	**Raquan Thomas (So.)**	65	Leyshawn Askew (Fr.)	
TE	81	**Adam Breneman (Sr.)**	87	Travis Reynolds (So.)	
QB	7	**Andrew Ford (Jr.)**	2	Ross Comis (Jr.)	
RB	8	**Marquis Young (Jr.)**	22	Bilal Ally (So.)	
FB	45	Malik Lee (Sr.)	37	Andrew Libby (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	95	**Sha-Ki Holines (Sr.)**	11	Roderick Jones Jr. (Sr.)	
DT	61	Joe Previte (Jr.)	94	Charly Timite (Fr.)	
NT	90	**Ali Ali-Musa (Sr.)**	96	Mario Patton (So.)	
DE	41	Da'Sean Downey (Sr.)	98	D'Shan Harley (So.)	
LB	34	**Steve Casali (Sr.)**	35	**Colbert Calhoun (Sr.)**	
LB	8	Shane Huber (Sr.)	49	Jeremy Rodriguez (Jr.)	
LB	6	**Tedrick Lowery (Sr.)**	26	Jarell Addo (Jr.)	
CB	39	**Isaiah Rodgers (So.)**	20	Jordin Hamilton (Sr.)	
CB	3	**Lee Moses (Jr.)**	28	Jackson Porter (Sr.)	
FS	27	Jesse Monteiro (Sr.)	45	Bakhari Goodson (So.)	
SS	25	Patrick Amara Jr. (Jr.)	24	Charan Singh (Jr.)	

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	31	Mike Caggiano (Jr.)	KR	39	Isaiah Rodgers (So.)
P	99	Logan Laurent (Sr.)	PR	23	Andy Isabella (Jr.)

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Andrew Ford, 365-222-2,665-14, 26 TDs
Rushing: Marquis Young, 198 att., 898 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Adam Breneman, 70 rec., 808 yds, 8 TDs
Tackles: Steve Casali, 105
Sacks: Da'Sean Downey, 6.0
Interceptions: Isaiah Rodgers, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mark Whipple
Record at School: 57-54 (9 years)
Career Record: 129-87 (19 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mark Whipple
Defensive Coordinator: Ed Pinkham
Amherst, MA • McGuirk Alumni Stadium (17,000)

UMass Athletics

2017 FBS COLLEGE FOOTBALL SCHEDULES

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE (7-6, 2-6)
Chestnut Hill, MA

Sept.	1	at Northern Illinois
Sept.	9	Wake Forest
Sept.	16	Notre Dame
Sept.	23	at Clemson
Sept.	30	Central Michigan
Oct.	7	Virginia Tech
Oct.	14	at Louisville
Oct.	21	at Virginia
Oct.	27	Florida State
Nov.	11	NC State
Nov.	18	vs. Connecticut #
Nov.	25	at Syracuse

#Boston, MA

CLEMSON (14-1, 7-1)
Clemson, SC

Sept.	2	Kent State
Sept.	9	Auburn
Sept.	16	at Louisville
Sept.	23	Boston College
Sept.	30	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	7	Wake Forest
Oct.	13	at Syracuse
Oct.	28	Georgia Tech
Nov.	4	at NC State
Nov.	11	Florida State
Nov.	18	The Citadel
Nov.	25	at South Carolina

DUKE (4-8, 1-7)
Durham, NC

Sept.	2	NC Central
Sept.	9	Northwestern
Sept.	16	Baylor
Sept.	23	at North Carolina
Sept.	29	Miami
Oct.	7	at Virginia
Oct.	14	Florida State
Oct.	21	Pittsburgh
Oct.	28	at Virginia Tech
Nov.	11	at Army
Nov.	18	Georgia Tech
Nov.	25	at Wake Forest

FLORIDA STATE (10-3, 5-3)
Tallahassee, FL

Sept.	2	vs. Alabama #
Sept.	9	UL Monroe
Sept.	16	Miami
Sept.	23	NC State
Sept.	30	at Wake Forest
Oct.	14	at Duke
Oct.	21	Louisville
Oct.	27	at Boston College
Nov.	4	Syracuse
Nov.	11	at Clemson
Nov.	18	Delaware State
Nov.	25	at Florida

#Atlanta, GA

GEORGIA TECH (9-4, 4-4)
Atlanta, GA

Sept.	4	Tennessee #
Sept.	9	Jacksonville State
Sept.	16	at UCF
Sept.	23	Pittsburgh
Sept.	30	North Carolina
Oct.	12	at Miami
Oct.	21	Wake Forest
Oct.	28	at Clemson
Nov.	4	at Virginia
Nov.	11	Virginia Tech
Nov.	18	at Duke
Nov.	25	Georgia

#Mercedes-Benz Stadium

LOUISVILLE (9-4, 7-1)
Louisville, KY

Sept.	2	vs. Purdue #
Sept.	9	at North Carolina
Sept.	16	Clemson
Sept.	23	Kent State
Sept.	30	Murray State
Oct.	5	at NC State
Oct.	14	Boston College
Oct.	21	at Florida State
Oct.	28	at Wake Forest
Nov.	11	Virginia
Nov.	18	Syracuse
Nov.	25	at Kentucky

#Indianapolis, IN

MIAMI (9-4, 5-3)
Coral Gables, FL

Sept.	2	Bethune-Cookman
Sept.	9	at Arkansas State
Sept.	16	at Florida State
Sept.	23	Toledo
Sept.	29	at Duke
Oct.	12	Georgia Tech
Oct.	21	Syracuse
Oct.	28	at North Carolina
Nov.	4	Virginia Tech
Nov.	11	Notre Dame
Nov.	18	Virginia
Nov.	24	at Pittsburgh

NORTH CAROLINA (8-5, 5-3)
Chapel Hill, NC

Sept.	2	California
Sept.	9	Louisville
Sept.	16	at Old Dominion
Sept.	23	Duke
Sept.	30	at Georgia Tech
Oct.	7	Notre Dame
Oct.	14	Virginia
Oct.	21	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	28	Miami
Nov.	9	at Pittsburgh
Nov.	18	Western Carolina
Nov.	25	at NC State

NC STATE (7-6, 3-5)
Raleigh, NC

Sept.	2	vs. South Carolina #
Sept.	9	Marshall
Sept.	16	Furman
Sept.	23	at Florida State
Sept.	30	Syracuse
Oct.	5	Louisville
Oct.	14	at Pittsburgh
Oct.	28	at Notre Dame
Nov.	4	Clemson
Nov.	11	at Boston College
Nov.	18	at Wake Forest
Nov.	25	North Carolina

#Charlotte, NC

PITTSBURGH (8-5, 5-3)
Pittsburgh, PA

Sept.	2	Youngstown State
Sept.	9	at Penn State
Sept.	16	Oklahoma State
Sept.	23	at Georgia Tech
Sept.	30	Rice
Oct.	7	at Syracuse
Oct.	14	NC State
Oct.	21	at Duke
Oct.	28	Virginia
Nov.	9	North Carolina
Nov.	18	at Virginia Tech
Nov.	24	Miami

SYRACUSE (4-8, 2-6)
Syracuse, NY

Sept.	2	C. Connecticut St.
Sept.	9	Middle Tennessee
Sept.	16	Central Michigan
Sept.	23	at LSU
Sept.	30	at NC State
Oct.	7	Pittsburgh
Oct.	13	Clemson
Oct.	21	at Miami
Nov.	4	at Florida State
Nov.	11	Wake Forest
Nov.	18	at Louisville
Nov.	25	Boston College

VIRGINIA (2-10, 1-7)
Charlottesville, VA

Sept.	2	William & Mary
Sept.	9	Indiana
Sept.	16	Connecticut
Sept.	22	at Boise State
Oct.	7	Duke
Oct.	14	at North Carolina
Oct.	21	Boston College
Oct.	28	at Pittsburgh
Nov.	4	Georgia Tech
Nov.	11	at Louisville
Nov.	18	at Miami
Nov.	24	Virginia Tech

VIRGINIA TECH (10-4, 6-2)
Blacksburg, VA

Sept.	3	vs. West Virginia #
Sept.	9	Delaware
Sept.	16	at East Carolina
Sept.	23	Old Dominion
Sept.	30	Clemson
Oct.	7	at Boston College
Oct.	21	North Carolina
Oct.	28	Duke
Nov.	4	at Miami
Nov.	11	at Georgia Tech
Nov.	18	Pittsburgh
Nov.	24	at Virginia

#Landover, MD

WAKE FOREST (7-6, 3-5)
Winston-Salem, NC

Aug.	31	Presbyterian
Sept.	9	at Boston College
Sept.	16	Utah State
Sept.	23	at Appalachian State
Sept.	30	Florida State
Oct.	7	at Clemson
Oct.	21	at Georgia Tech
Oct.	28	Louisville
Nov.	4	at Notre Dame
Nov.	11	at Syracuse
Nov.	18	NC State
Nov.	25	Duke

AMERICAN

CINCINNATI (4-8, 1-7)
Cincinnati, OH

Aug.	31	Austin Peay
Sept.	9	at Michigan
Sept.	16	at Miami (Ohio)
Sept.	23	at Navy
Sept.	30	Marshall
Oct.	7	UCF
Oct.	21	SMU
Oct.	28	at South Florida
Nov.	4	at Tulane
Nov.	10	Temple
Nov.	18	at East Carolina
Nov.	25	Connecticut

CONNECTICUT (3-9, 1-7)
Storrs, CT

Aug.	31	Holy Cross
Sept.	9	South Florida
Sept.	16	at Virginia
Sept.	30	at SMU
Oct.	6	Memphis
Oct.	14	at Temple
Oct.	21	Tulsa
Oct.	28	Missouri
Nov.	4	East Carolina
Nov.	11	at UCF
Nov.	18	vs. Boston College #
Nov.	25	at Cincinnati

#Boston, MA

EAST CAROLINA (3-9, 1-7)
Greenville, NC

Sept.	2	James Madison
Sept.	9	at West Virginia
Sept.	16	Virginia Tech
Sept.	30	South Florida
Oct.	7	Temple
Oct.	14	at UCF
Oct.	21	BYU
Oct.	28	at Houston
Nov.	4	at Connecticut
Nov.	11	Tulane
Nov.	18	Cincinnati
Nov.	25	at Memphis

HOUSTON (9-4, 5-3)
Houston, TX

Sept.	2	at UTSA
Sept.	9	at Arizona
Sept.	16	Rice
Sept.	23	Texas Tech
Sept.	30	at Temple
Oct.	7	SMU
Oct.	14	at Tulsa
Oct.	19	Memphis
Oct.	28	East Carolina
Nov.	4	at South Florida
Nov.	18	at Tulane
Nov.	24	Navy

MEMPHIS (8-5, 5-3)
Memphis, TN

Aug.	31	UL Monroe
Sept.	9	at UCF
Sept.	16	UCLA
Sept.	23	Southern Illinois
Sept.	30	at Georgia State
Oct.	6	at Connecticut
Oct.	14	Navy
Oct.	19	at Houston
Oct.	27	Tulane
Nov.	3	at Tulsa
Nov.	18	SMU
Nov.	25	East Carolina

NAVY (9-5, 7-1)
Annapolis, MD

Sept.	1	at Florida Atlantic
Sept.	9	Tulane
Sept.	23	Cincinnati
Sept.	30	at Tulsa
Oct.	7	Air Force
Oct.	14	at Memphis
Oct.	21	UCF
Nov.	2	at Temple
Nov.	11	SMU
Nov.	18	at Notre Dame
Nov.	24	at Houston
Dec.	9	vs. Army #

#Philadelphia, PA

SMU (5-7, 3-5)
Dallas, TX

Sept.	2	Stephen F. Austin
Sept.	9	North Texas
Sept.	16	at TCU
Sept.	23	Arkansas State
Sept.	30	Connecticut
Oct.	7	at Houston
Oct.	21	at Cincinnati
Oct.	27	Tulsa
Nov.	4	UCF
Nov.	11	at Navy
Nov.	18	at Memphis
Nov.	25	Tulane

SOUTH FLORIDA (11-2, 7-1)
Tampa, FL

Aug.	26	at San Jose State
Sept.	2	Stony Brook
Sept.	9	at Connecticut
Sept.	15	Illinois
Sept.	21	Temple
Sept.	30	at East Carolina
Oct.	14	Massachusetts
Oct.	21	at Tulane
Oct.	28	Cincinnati
Nov.	4	Houston
Nov.	18	Tulsa
Nov.	24	at UCF

TEMPLE (10-4, 7-1)
Philadelphia, PA

Sept.	2	at Notre Dame
Sept.	9	Villanova
Sept.	15	Massachusetts
Sept.	21	at South Florida
Sept.	30	Houston
Oct.	7	at East Carolina
Oct.	14	Connecticut
Oct.	21	at Army
Nov.	2	Navy
Nov.	10	at Cincinnati
Nov.	18	UCF
Nov.	25	at Tulsa

TULANE (4-8, 1-7)
New Orleans, LA

Sept.	2	Grambling State
Sept.	9	at Navy
Sept.	16	at Oklahoma
Sept.	23	Army
Oct.	7	Tulsa
Oct.	14	at FIU
Oct.	21	South Florida
Oct.	27	at Memphis
Nov.	4	Cincinnati
Nov.	11	at East Carolina
Nov.	18	Houston
Nov.	25	at SMU

TULSA (10-3, 6-2)
Tulsa, OK

Sept.	2	at Oklahoma State
Sept.	9	UL Lafayette
Sept.	16	at Toledo
Sept.	23	New Mexico
Sept.	30	Navy
Oct.	7	at Tulane
Oct.	14	Houston
Oct.	21	at Connecticut
Oct.	27	at SMU
Nov.	3	Memphis
Nov.	18	at South Florida
Nov.	25	Temple

UCF (6-7, 4-4)
Orlando, FL

Sept.	2	FIU
Sept.	9	Memphis
Sept.	16	Georgia Tech
Sept.	23	at Maryland
Sept.	30	Maine
Oct.	7	at Cincinnati
Oct.	14	East Carolina
Oct.	21	at Navy
Nov.	4	at SMU
Nov.	11	Connecticut
Nov.	18	at Temple
Nov.	24	South Florida

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS (3-9, 2-7)
Champaign, IL

Sept.	2	Ball State
Sept.	9	Western Kentucky
Sept.	15	at South Florida
Sept.	29	Nebraska
Oct.	7	at Iowa
Oct.	14	Rutgers
Oct.	21	at Minnesota
Oct.	28	Wisconsin
Nov.	4	at Purdue
Nov.	11	Indiana
Nov.	18	at Ohio State
Nov.	25	Northwestern

INDIANA (6-7, 4-5)
Bloomington, IN

Aug.	31	Ohio State
Sept.	9	at Virginia
Sept.	16	FIU
Sept.	23	Georgia Southern
Sept.	30	at Penn State
Oct.	14	Michigan
Oct.	21	at Michigan State
Oct.	28	at Maryland
Nov.	4	Wisconsin
Nov.	11	at Illinois
Nov.	18	Rutgers
Nov.	25	at Purdue

IOWA (8-5, 6-3)
Iowa City, IA

Sept.	2	Wyoming
Sept.	9	at Iowa State
Sept.	16	North Texas
Sept.	23	Penn State
Sept.	30	at Michigan State
Oct.	7	Illinois
Oct.	21	at Northwestern
Oct.	28	Minnesota
Nov.	4	Ohio State
Nov.	11	at Wisconsin
Nov.	18	Purdue
Nov.	24	at Nebraska

MARYLAND (6-7, 3-6)
College Park, MD

Sept.	2	at Texas
Sept.	9	Towson
Sept.	23	UCF
Sept.	30	at Minnesota
Oct.	7	at Ohio State
Oct.	14	Northwestern
Oct.	21	at Wisconsin
Oct.	28	Indiana
Nov.	4	vs. Rutgers #
Nov.	11	Michigan
Nov.	18	at Michigan State
Nov.	25	Penn State

#Bronx, NY

MICHIGAN (10-3, 7-2)
Ann Arbor, MI

Sept.	2	vs. Florida #
Sept.	9	Cincinnati
Sept.	16	Air Force
Sept.	23	at Purdue
Oct.	7	Michigan State
Oct.	14	at Indiana
Oct.	21	at Penn State
Oct.	28	Rutgers
Nov.	4	Minnesota
Nov.	11	at Maryland
Nov.	18	at Wisconsin
Nov.	25	Ohio State

#Arlington, TX

MICHIGAN STATE (3-9, 1-8)
East Lansing, MI

Sept.	2	Bowling Green
Sept.	9	Western Michigan
Sept.	23	Notre Dame
Sept.	30	Iowa
Oct.	7	at Michigan
Oct.	14	at Minnesota
Oct.	21	Indiana
Oct.	28	at Northwestern
Nov.	4	Penn State
Nov.	11	at Ohio State
Nov.	18	Maryland
Nov.	25	at Rutgers

MINNESOTA (9-4, 5-4)
Minneapolis, MN

Aug.	31	Buffalo
Sept.	9	at Oregon State
Sept.	16	Middle Tennessee
Sept.	30	Maryland
Oct.	7	at Purdue
Oct.	14	Michigan State
Oct.	21	Illinois
Oct.	28	at Iowa
Nov.	4	at Michigan
Nov.	11	Nebraska
Nov.	18	at Northwestern
Nov.	25	Wisconsin

NEBRASKA (9-4, 6-3)
Lincoln, NE

Sept.	2	Arkansas State
Sept.	9	at Oregon
Sept.	16	Northern Illinois
Sept.	23	Rutgers
Sept.	29	at Illinois
Oct.	7	Wisconsin
Oct.	14	Ohio State
Oct.	28	at Purdue
Nov.	4	Northwestern
Nov.	11	at Minnesota
Nov.	18	at Penn State
Nov.	24	Iowa

NORTHWESTERN (7-6, 5-4)
Evanston, IL

Sept.	2	Nevada
Sept.	9	at Duke
Sept.	16	Bowling Green
Sept.	30	at Wisconsin
Oct.	7	Penn State
Oct.	14	at Maryland
Oct.	21	Iowa
Oct.	28	Michigan State
Nov.	4	at Nebraska
Nov.	11	Purdue
Nov.	18	Minnesota
Nov.	25	at Illinois

OHIO STATE (11-2, 8-1)
Columbus, OH

Aug.	31	at Indiana
Sept.	9	Oklahoma
Sept.	16	Army
Sept.	23	UNLV
Sept.	30	at Rutgers
Oct.	7	Maryland
Oct.	14	at Nebraska
Oct.	28	Penn State
Nov.	4	at Iowa
Nov.	11	Michigan State
Nov.	18	Illinois
Nov.	25	at Michigan

PENN STATE (11-3, 8-1)
University Park, PA

Sept.	2	Akron
Sept.	9	Pittsburgh
Sept.	16	Georgia State
Sept.	23	at Iowa
Sept.	30	Indiana
Oct.	7	at Northwestern
Oct.	21	Michigan
Oct.	28	at Ohio State
Nov.	4	at Michigan State
Nov.	11	Rutgers
Nov.	18	Nebraska
Nov.	25	at Maryland

PURDUE (3-9, 1-8)
West Lafayette, IN

Sept.	2	vs. Louisville #
Sept.	8	Ohio
Sept.	16	at Missouri
Sept.	23	Michigan
Oct.	7	Minnesota
Oct.	14	at Wisconsin
Oct.	21	at Rutgers
Oct.	28	Nebraska
Nov.	4	Illinois
Nov.	11	at Northwestern
Nov.	18	at Iowa
Nov.	25	Indiana

#Indianapolis, IN

RUTGERS (2-10, 0-9)
New Brunswick, NJ

Sept.	1	Washington
Sept.	9	Eastern Michigan
Sept.	16	Morgan State
Sept.	23	at Nebraska
Sept.	30	Ohio State
Oct.	14	at Illinois
Oct.	21	Purdue
Oct.	28	at Michigan
Nov.	4	vs. Maryland #
Nov.	11	at Penn State
Nov.	18	at Indiana
Nov.	25	Michigan State

#Bronx, NY

WISCONSIN (11-3, 7-2)
Madison, WI

Sept.	1	Utah State
Sept.	9	Florida Atlantic
Sept.	16	at BYU
Sept.	30	Northwestern
Oct.	7	at Nebraska
Oct.	14	Purdue
Oct.	21	Maryland
Oct.	28	at Illinois
Nov.	4	at Indiana
Nov.	11	Iowa
Nov.	18	Michigan
Nov.	25	at Minnesota

BIG 12

BAYLOR (7-6, 3-6)
Waco, TX

Sept.	2	Liberty
Sept.	9	UTSA
Sept.	16	at Duke
Sept.	23	Oklahoma
Sept.	30	at Kansas State
Oct.	14	at Oklahoma State
Oct.	21	West Virginia
Oct.	28	Texas
Nov.	4	at Kansas
Nov.	11	vs. Texas Tech #
Nov.	18	Iowa State
Nov.	24	at TCU

#Arlington, TX

IOWA STATE (3-9, 2-7)
Ames, IA

Sept.	2	Northern Iowa
Sept.	9	Iowa
Sept.	16	at Akron
Sept.	28	Texas
Oct.	7	at Oklahoma
Oct.	14	Kansas
Oct.	21	at Texas Tech
Oct.	28	TCU
Nov.	4	at West Virginia
Nov.	11	Oklahoma State
Nov.	18	at Baylor
Nov.	25	at Kansas State

KANSAS (2-10, 1-8)
Lawrence, KS

Sept.	2	SE Missouri State
Sept.	9	Central Michigan
Sept.	16	at Ohio
Sept.	23	West Virginia
Oct.	7	Texas Tech
Oct.	14	at Iowa State
Oct.	21	at TCU
Oct.	28	Kansas State
Nov.	4	Baylor
Nov.	11	at Texas
Nov.	18	Oklahoma
Nov.	25	at Oklahoma State

KANSAS STATE (9-4, 6-3)
Manhattan, KS

Sept.	2	Central Arkansas
Sept.	9	Charlotte
Sept.	16	at Vanderbilt
Sept.	30	Baylor
Oct.	7	at Texas
Oct.	14	TCU
Oct.	21	Oklahoma
Oct.	28	at Kansas
Nov.	4	at Texas Tech
Nov.	11	West Virginia
Nov.	18	at Oklahoma State
Nov.	25	Iowa State

OKLAHOMA (11-2, 9-0)
Norman, OK

Sept.	2	UTEP
Sept.	9	at Ohio State
Sept.	16	Tulane
Sept.	23	at Baylor
Oct.	7	Iowa State
Oct.	14	vs. Texas #
Oct.	21	at Kansas State
Oct.	28	Texas Tech
Nov.	4	at Oklahoma State
Nov.	11	TCU
Nov.	18	at Kansas
Nov.	25	West Virginia

#Dallas, TX

OKLAHOMA STATE (10-3, 7-1)
Stillwater, OK

Sept.	2	Tulsa
Sept.	9	at South Alabama
Sept.	16	at Pittsburgh
Sept.	23	TCU
Sept.	30	at Texas Tech
Oct.	14	Baylor
Oct.	21	at Texas
Oct.	28	at West Virginia
Nov.	4	Oklahoma
Nov.	11	at Iowa State
Nov.	18	Kansas State
Nov.	25	Kansas

TCU (6-7, 4-5)
Fort Worth, TX

Sept.	2	Jackson State
Sept.	9	at Arkansas
Sept.	16	SMU
Sept.	23	at Oklahoma State
Oct.	7	West Virginia
Oct.	14	at Kansas State
Oct.	21	Kansas
Oct.	28	at Iowa State
Nov.	4	Texas
Nov.	11	at Oklahoma
Nov.	18	at Texas Tech
Nov.	24	Baylor

TEXAS (5-7, 3-6)
Austin, TX

Sept.	2	Maryland
Sept.	9	San Jose State
Sept.	16	at USC
Sept.	28	at Iowa State
Oct.	7	Kansas State
Oct.	14	vs. Oklahoma #
Oct.	21	Oklahoma State
Oct.	28	at Baylor
Nov.	4	at TCU
Nov.	11	Kansas
Nov.	18	at West Virginia
Nov.	24	Texas Tech

#Dallas, TX

TEXAS TECH (5-7, 3-6)
Lubbock, TX

Sept.	3	Eastern Washington
Sept.	16	Arizona State
Sept.	23	at Houston
Sept.	30	Oklahoma State
Oct.	7	at Kansas
Oct.	14	at West Virginia
Oct.	21	Iowa State
Oct.	28	at Oklahoma
Nov.	4	Kansas State
Nov.	11	vs. Baylor #
Nov.	18	TCU
Nov.	24	at Texas

#Arlington, TX

WEST VIRGINIA (10-3, 7-2)
Morgantown, WV

Sept.	3	vs. Virginia Tech #
Sept.	9	East Carolina
Sept.	16	Delaware State
Sept.	23	at Kansas
Oct.	7	at TCU
Oct.	14	Texas Tech
Oct.	21	at Baylor
Oct.	28	Oklahoma State
Nov.	4	Iowa State
Nov.	11	at Kansas State
Nov.	18	Texas
Nov.	25	at Oklahoma

#Landover, MD

C-USA

CHARLOTTE (4-8, 3-5)
Charlotte, NC

Sept.	2	at Eastern Michigan
Sept.	9	at Kansas State
Sept.	16	North Carolina A&T
Sept.	23	Georgia State
Sept.	30	at FIU
Oct.	7	Marshall
Oct.	14	at Western Kentucky
Oct.	21	UAB
Nov.	4	at Old Dominion
Nov.	11	Middle Tennessee
Nov.	18	at Southern Miss
Nov.	25	Florida Atlantic

FLORIDA ATLANTIC (3-9, 2-6)
Boca Raton, FL

Sept.	1	Navy
Sept.	9	at Wisconsin
Sept.	16	Bethune-Cookman
Sept.	23	at Buffalo
Sept.	30	Middle Tennessee
Oct.	7	at Old Dominion
Oct.	21	North Texas
Oct.	28	at Western Kentucky
Nov.	3	Marshall
Nov.	11	at Louisiana Tech
Nov.	18	FIU
Nov.	25	at Charlotte

FIU (4-8, 4-4)
Miami, FL

Sept.	2	at UCF
Sept.	9	Alcorn State
Sept.	16	at Indiana
Sept.	23	at Rice
Sept.	30	Charlotte
Oct.	7	at Middle Tennessee
Oct.	14	Tulane
Oct.	28	at Marshall
Nov.	4	UTSA
Nov.	11	Old Dominion
Nov.	18	at Florida Atlantic
Nov.	25	Western Kentucky

LOUISIANA TECH (9-5, 6-2)
Ruston, LA

Sept.	2	Northwestern State
Sept.	9	Mississippi State
Sept.	16	at Western Kentucky
Sept.	23	at South Carolina
Sept.	30	South Alabama
Oct.	7	at UAB
Oct.	21	Southern Miss
Oct.	28	at Rice
Nov.	4	North Texas
Nov.	11	Florida Atlantic
Nov.	18	at UTEP
Nov.	25	UTSA

MARSHALL (3-9, 2-6)
Huntington, WV

Sept.	2	Miami (Ohio)
Sept.	9	at NC State
Sept.	16	Kent State
Sept.	30	at Cincinnati
Oct.	7	at Charlotte
Oct.	14	Old Dominion
Oct.	20	at Middle Tennessee
Oct.	28	FIU
Nov.	3	at Florida Atlantic
Nov.	11	Western Kentucky
Nov.	18	at UTSA
Nov.	25	Southern Miss

MIDDLE TENNESSEE (8-5, 5-3)
Murfreesboro, TN

Sept.	2	Vanderbilt
Sept.	9	at Syracuse
Sept.	16	at Minnesota
Sept.	23	Bowling Green
Sept.	30	at Florida Atlantic
Oct.	7	FIU
Oct.	14	at UAB
Oct.	20	Marshall
Nov.	4	UTEP
Nov.	11	at Charlotte
Nov.	17	at Western Kentucky
Nov.	25	Old Dominion

NORTH TEXAS (5-8, 3-5)
Denton, TX

Sept.	2	Lamar
Sept.	9	at SMU
Sept.	16	at Iowa
Sept.	23	UAB
Sept.	30	at Southern Miss
Oct.	14	UTSA
Oct.	21	at Florida Atlantic
Oct.	28	Old Dominion
Nov.	4	at Louisiana Tech
Nov.	11	UTEP
Nov.	18	Army
Nov.	25	at Rice

OLD DOMINION (10-3, 7-1)
Norfolk, VA

Sept.	2	Albany
Sept.	9	at Massachusetts
Sept.	16	North Carolina
Sept.	23	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	7	Florida Atlantic
Oct.	14	at Marshall
Oct.	20	Western Kentucky
Oct.	28	at North Texas
Nov.	4	Charlotte
Nov.	11	at FIU
Nov.	18	Rice
Nov.	25	at Middle Tennessee

RICE (3-9, 2-6)
Houston, TX

Aug.	26	vs. Stanford #
Sept.	9	at UTEP
Sept.	16	at Houston
Sept.	23	FIU
Sept.	30	at Pittsburgh
Oct.	7	Army
Oct.	21	at UTSA
Oct.	28	Louisiana Tech
Nov.	4	at UAB
Nov.	11	Southern Miss
Nov.	18	at Old Dominion
Nov.	25	North Texas

#Sydney, Australia

SOUTHERN MISS (7-6, 4-4)
Hattiesburg, MS

Sept.	2	Kentucky
Sept.	9	Southern
Sept.	16	at UL Monroe
Sept.	30	North Texas
Oct.	7	at UTSA
Oct.	14	UTEP
Oct.	21	at Louisiana Tech
Oct.	28	UAB
Nov.	4	at Tennessee
Nov.	11	at Rice
Nov.	18	Charlotte
Nov.	25	at Marshall

UAB
Birmingham, AL

Sept.	2	Alabama A&M
Sept.	9	at Ball State
Sept.	16	Coastal Carolina
Sept.	23	at North Texas
Oct.	7	Louisiana Tech
Oct.	14	Middle Tennessee
Oct.	21	at Charlotte
Oct.	28	at Southern Miss
Nov.	4	Rice
Nov.	11	at UTSA
Nov.	18	at Florida
Nov.	25	UTEP

UTEP (4-8, 2-6)
El Paso, TX

Sept.	2	at Oklahoma
Sept.	9	Rice
Sept.	15	Arizona
Sept.	23	at New Mexico State
Sept.	30	at Army
Oct.	7	Western Kentucky
Oct.	14	at Southern Miss
Oct.	28	UTSA
Nov.	4	at Middle Tennessee
Nov.	11	at North Texas
Nov.	18	Louisiana Tech
Nov.	25	at UAB

UTSA (6-7, 5-3)
San Antonio, TX

Sept.	2	Houston
Sept.	9	at Baylor
Sept.	16	Southern
Sept.	23	at Texas State
Oct.	7	Southern Miss
Oct.	14	at North Texas
Oct.	21	Rice
Oct.	28	at UTEP
Nov.	4	at FIU
Nov.	11	UAB
Nov.	18	Marshall
Nov.	25	at Louisiana Tech

WESTERN KENTUCKY (11-3, 7-1)
Bowling Green, KY

Sept.	2	Eastern Kentucky
Sept.	9	at Illinois
Sept.	16	Louisiana Tech
Sept.	23	Ball State
Oct.	7	at UTEP
Oct.	14	Charlotte
Oct.	20	at Old Dominion
Oct.	28	Florida Atlantic
Nov.	4	at Vanderbilt
Nov.	11	at Marshall
Nov.	17	Middle Tennessee
Nov.	25	at FIU

MAC

AKRON (5-7, 3-5)
Akron, OH

Sept.	2	at Penn State
Sept.	9	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Sept.	16	Iowa State
Sept.	23	at Troy
Sept.	30	at Bowling Green
Oct.	7	Ball State
Oct.	14	at Western Michigan
Oct.	21	at Toledo
Oct.	28	Buffalo
Nov.	7	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	14	Ohio
Nov.	21	Kent State

BALL STATE (4-8, 1-7)
Muncie, IN

Sept.	2	at Illinois
Sept.	9	UAB
Sept.	16	Tennessee Tech
Sept.	23	at Western Kentucky
Sept.	30	at Western Michigan
Oct.	7	at Akron
Oct.	21	Central Michigan
Oct.	26	Toledo
Nov.	2	at Eastern Michigan
Nov.	9	at Northern Illinois
Nov.	16	Buffalo
Nov.	21	Miami (Ohio)

BOWLING GREEN (4-8, 3-5)
Bowling Green, OH

Sept.	2	at Michigan State
Sept.	9	South Dakota
Sept.	16	at Northwestern
Sept.	23	at Middle Tennessee
Sept.	30	Akron
Oct.	7	at Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	14	Ohio
Oct.	21	Northern Illinois
Oct.	31	at Kent State
Nov.	7	at Buffalo
Nov.	15	Toledo
Nov.	21	at Eastern Michigan

BUFFALO (2-10, 1-7)
Buffalo, NY

Aug.	31	at Minnesota
Sept.	9	at Army
Sept.	16	Colgate
Sept.	23	Florida Atlantic
Sept.	30	at Kent State
Oct.	7	Western Michigan
Oct.	14	Northern Illinois
Oct.	21	at Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	28	at Akron
Nov.	7	Bowling Green
Nov.	16	at Ball State
Nov.	24	Ohio

CENTRAL MICHIGAN (6-7, 3-5)
Mt. Pleasant, MI

Aug.	31	Rhode Island
Sept.	9	at Kansas
Sept.	16	at Syracuse
Sept.	23	Miami (Ohio)
Sept.	30	at Boston College
Oct.	7	at Ohio
Oct.	14	Toledo
Oct.	21	at Ball State
Nov.	1	at Western Michigan
Nov.	8	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	14	at Kent State
Nov.	24	Northern Illinois

EASTERN MICHIGAN (7-6, 4-4)
Ypsilanti, MI

Sept.	1	Charlotte
Sept.	9	at Rutgers
Sept.	23	Ohio
Sept.	30	at Kentucky
Oct.	7	at Toledo
Oct.	14	at Army
Oct.	21	Western Michigan
Oct.	26	at Northern Illinois
Nov.	2	Ball State
Nov.	8	at Central Michigan
Nov.	15	at Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	21	Bowling Green

KENT STATE (3-9, 2-6)
Kent, OH

Sept.	2	at Clemson
Sept.	9	Howard
Sept.	16	at Marshall
Sept.	23	at Louisville
Sept.	30	Buffalo
Oct.	7	at Northern Illinois
Oct.	14	Miami (Ohio)
Oct.	21	at Ohio
Oct.	31	Bowling Green
Nov.	8	at Western Michigan
Nov.	14	Central Michigan
Nov.	21	at Akron

MIAMI (OHIO) (6-7, 6-2)
Oxford, OH

Sept.	2	at Marshall
Sept.	9	Austin Peay
Sept.	16	Cincinnati
Sept.	23	at Central Michigan
Sept.	30	at Notre Dame
Oct.	7	Bowling Green
Oct.	14	at Kent State
Oct.	21	Buffalo
Oct.	31	at Ohio
Nov.	7	Akron
Nov.	15	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	21	at Ball State

NORTHERN ILLINOIS (5-7, 5-3)
Dekalb, IL

Sept.	1	Boston College
Sept.	9	Eastern Illinois
Sept.	16	at Nebraska
Sept.	30	at San Diego State
Oct.	7	Kent State
Oct.	14	at Buffalo
Oct.	21	at Bowling Green
Oct.	26	Eastern Michigan
Nov.	2	at Toledo
Nov.	9	Ball State
Nov.	15	Western Michigan
Nov.	24	at Central Michigan

OHIO (8-6, 6-2)
Athens, OH

Sept.	2	Hampton
Sept.	8	at Purdue
Sept.	16	Kansas
Sept.	23	at Eastern Michigan
Sept.	30	at Massachusetts
Oct.	7	Central Michigan
Oct.	14	at Bowling Green
Oct.	21	Kent State
Oct.	31	Miami (Ohio)
Nov.	8	Toledo
Nov.	14	at Akron
Nov.	24	at Buffalo

TOLEDO (9-4, 6-2)
Toledo, OH

Aug.	31	Elon
Sept.	9	at Nevada
Sept.	16	Tulsa
Sept.	23	at Miami (Fla.)
Oct.	7	Eastern Michigan
Oct.	14	at Central Michigan
Oct.	21	Akron
Oct.	26	at Ball State
Nov.	2	Northern Illinois
Nov.	8	at Ohio
Nov.	15	at Bowling Green
Nov.	24	Western Michigan

WESTERN MICHIGAN (13-1, 8-0)
Kalamazoo, MI

Sept.	2	at USC
Sept.	9	at Michigan State
Sept.	16	Idaho
Sept.	23	Wagner
Sept.	30	Ball State
Oct.	7	at Buffalo
Oct.	14	Akron
Oct.	21	at Eastern Michigan
Nov.	1	Central Michigan
Nov.	8	Kent State
Nov.	15	at Northern Illinois
Nov.	24	at Toledo

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE (10-3, 5-3)
Colorado Springs, CO

Sept.	2	VMI
Sept.	16	at Michigan
Sept.	23	San Diego State
Sept.	30	at New Mexico
Oct.	7	at Navy
Oct.	14	UNLV
Oct.	21	at Nevada
Oct.	28	at Colorado State
Nov.	4	Army
Nov.	11	Wyoming
Nov.	18	at Boise State
Nov.	25	Utah State

BOISE STATE (10-3, 6-2)
Boise, ID

Sept.	2	Troy
Sept.	9	at Washington State
Sept.	16	New Mexico
Sept.	22	Virginia
Oct.	6	at BYU
Oct.	14	at San Diego State
Oct.	21	Wyoming
Oct.	28	at Utah State
Nov.	4	Nevada
Nov.	11	at Colorado State
Nov.	18	Air Force
Nov.	25	at Fresno State

COLORADO STATE (7-6, 5-3)
Fort Collins, CO

Aug.	26	Oregon State
Sept.	1	vs. Colorado #
Sept.	9	Abilene Christian
Sept.	16	at Alabama
Sept.	30	at Hawaii
Oct.	7	at Utah State
Oct.	14	Nevada
Oct.	21	at New Mexico
Oct.	28	Air Force
Nov.	4	at Wyoming
Nov.	11	Boise State
Nov.	18	San Jose State

#Denver, CO

FRESNO STATE (1-11, 0-8)
Fresno, CA

Sept.	2	Incarnate Word
Sept.	9	at Alabama
Sept.	16	at Washington
Sept.	30	Nevada
Oct.	7	at San Jose State
Oct.	14	New Mexico
Oct.	21	at San Diego State
Oct.	28	UNLV
Nov.	4	BYU
Nov.	11	at Hawaii
Nov.	18	at Wyoming
Nov.	25	Boise State

HAWAII (7-7, 4-4)
Honolulu, HI

Aug.	26	Massachusetts
Sept.	2	Western Carolina
Sept.	9	at UCLA
Sept.	23	at Wyoming
Sept.	30	Colorado State
Oct.	7	at Nevada
Oct.	14	San Jose State
Oct.	28	San Diego State
Nov.	4	at UNLV
Nov.	11	Fresno State
Nov.	18	at Utah State
Nov.	25	BYU

NEVADA (5-7, 3-5)
Reno, NV

Sept.	2	at Northwestern
Sept.	9	Toledo
Sept.	16	Idaho State
Sept.	23	at Washington State
Sept.	30	at Fresno State
Oct.	7	Hawaii
Oct.	14	at Colorado State
Oct.	21	Air Force
Nov.	4	at Boise State
Nov.	11	San Jose State
Nov.	18	at San Diego State
Nov.	25	UNLV

NEW MEXICO (9-4, 6-2)
Albuquerque, NM

Sept.	2	Abilene Christian
Sept.	9	New Mexico State
Sept.	16	at Boise State
Sept.	23	at Tulsa
Sept.	30	Air Force
Oct.	14	at Fresno State
Oct.	21	Colorado State
Oct.	28	at Wyoming
Nov.	4	Utah State
Nov.	11	at Texas A&M
Nov.	18	UNLV
Nov.	25	at San Diego State

SAN DIEGO STATE (11-3, 6-2)
San Diego, CA

Sept.	2	UC Davis
Sept.	9	at Arizona State
Sept.	16	Stanford
Sept.	23	at Air Force
Sept.	30	Northern Illinois
Oct.	7	at UNLV
Oct.	14	Boise State
Oct.	21	Fresno State
Oct.	28	at Hawaii
Nov.	4	at San Jose State
Nov.	18	Nevada
Nov.	25	New Mexico

SAN JOSE STATE (4-8, 3-5)
San Jose, CA

Aug.	26	South Florida
Sept.	2	Cal Poly
Sept.	9	at Texas
Sept.	16	at Utah
Sept.	23	Utah State
Sept.	30	at UNLV
Oct.	7	Fresno State
Oct.	14	at Hawaii
Oct.	28	at BYU
Nov.	4	San Diego State
Nov.	11	at Nevada
Nov.	18	at Colorado State
Nov.	25	Wyoming

UNLV (4-8, 3-5)
Las Vegas, NV

Sept.	2	Howard
Sept.	9	at Idaho
Sept.	23	at Ohio State
Sept.	30	San Jose State
Oct.	7	San Diego State
Oct.	14	at Air Force
Oct.	21	Utah State
Oct.	28	at Fresno State
Nov.	4	Hawaii
Nov.	10	BYU
Nov.	18	at New Mexico
Nov.	25	at Nevada

UTAH STATE (3-9, 1-7)
Logan, UT

Sept.	1	at Wisconsin
Sept.	7	Idaho State
Sept.	16	at Wake Forest
Sept.	23	at San Jose State
Sept.	29	BYU
Oct.	7	Colorado State
Oct.	14	Wyoming
Oct.	21	at UNLV
Oct.	28	Boise State
Nov.	4	at New Mexico
Nov.	18	Hawaii
Nov.	25	at Air Force

WYOMING (8-6, 6-2)
Laramie, WY

Sept.	2	at Iowa
Sept.	9	Gardner-Webb
Sept.	16	Oregon
Sept.	23	Hawaii
Sept.	30	Texas State
Oct.	14	at Utah State
Oct.	21	at Boise State
Oct.	28	New Mexico
Nov.	4	Colorado State
Nov.	11	at Air Force
Nov.	18	Fresno State
Nov.	25	at San Jose State

PAC-12

ARIZONA (3-9, 1-8)
Tucson, AZ

Sept.	2	Northern Arizona
Sept.	9	Houston
Sept.	15	at UTEP
Sept.	22	Utah
Oct.	7	at Colorado
Oct.	14	UCLA
Oct.	21	at California
Oct.	28	Washington State
Nov.	4	at USC
Nov.	11	Oregon State
Nov.	18	at Oregon
Nov.	25	at Arizona State

ARIZONA STATE (5-7, 2-7)
Tempe, AZ

Aug.	31	New Mexico State
Sept.	9	San Diego State
Sept.	16	at Texas Tech
Sept.	23	Oregon
Sept.	30	at Stanford
Oct.	14	Washington
Oct.	21	at Utah
Oct.	28	USC
Nov.	4	Colorado
Nov.	11	at UCLA
Nov.	18	at Oregon State
Nov.	25	Arizona

CALIFORNIA (5-7, 3-6)
Berkeley, CA

Sept.	2	at North Carolina
Sept.	9	Weber State
Sept.	16	Ole Miss
Sept.	23	USC
Sept.	30	at Oregon
Oct.	7	at Washington
Oct.	13	Washington State
Oct.	21	Arizona
Oct.	28	at Colorado
Nov.	4	Oregon State
Nov.	18	at Stanford
Nov.	24	at UCLA

COLORADO (10-4, 8-1)
Boulder, CO

Sept.	1	vs. Colorado State #
Sept.	9	Texas State
Sept.	16	Northern Colorado
Sept.	23	Washington
Sept.	30	at UCLA
Oct.	7	Arizona
Oct.	14	at Oregon State
Oct.	21	at Washington State
Oct.	28	California
Nov.	4	at Arizona State
Nov.	11	USC
Nov.	25	at Utah

#Denver, CO

OREGON (4-8, 2-7)
Eugene, OR

Sept.	2	Southern Utah
Sept.	9	Nebraska
Sept.	16	at Wyoming
Sept.	23	at Arizona State
Sept.	30	California
Oct.	7	Washington State
Oct.	14	at Stanford
Oct.	21	at UCLA
Oct.	28	Utah
Nov.	4	at Washington
Nov.	18	Arizona
Nov.	25	Oregon State

OREGON STATE (4-8, 3-6)
Corvallis, OR

Aug.	26	at Colorado State
Sept.	2	Portland State
Sept.	9	Minnesota
Sept.	16	at Washington State
Sept.	30	Washington
Oct.	7	at USC
Oct.	14	Colorado
Oct.	26	Stanford
Nov.	4	at California
Nov.	11	at Arizona
Nov.	18	Arizona State
Nov.	25	at Oregon

STANFORD (10-3, 6-3)
Stanford, CA

Aug.	26	vs. Rice #
Sept.	9	at USC
Sept.	16	at San Diego State
Sept.	23	UCLA
Sept.	30	Arizona State
Oct.	7	at Utah
Oct.	14	Oregon
Oct.	26	at Oregon State
Nov.	4	at Washington State
Nov.	10	Washington
Nov.	18	California
Nov.	25	Notre Dame

#Sydney, Australia

UCLA (4-8, 2-7)
Los Angeles, CA

Sept.	3	Texas A&M
Sept.	9	Hawaii
Sept.	16	at Memphis
Sept.	23	at Stanford
Sept.	30	Colorado
Oct.	14	at Arizona
Oct.	21	Oregon
Oct.	28	at Washington
Nov.	3	at Utah
Nov.	11	Arizona State
Nov.	18	at USC
Nov.	24	California

USC (10-3, 7-2)
Los Angeles, CA

Sept.	2	Western Michigan
Sept.	9	Stanford
Sept.	16	Texas
Sept.	23	at California
Sept.	29	at Washington State
Oct.	7	Oregon State
Oct.	14	Utah
Oct.	21	at Notre Dame
Oct.	28	at Arizona State
Nov.	4	Arizona
Nov.	11	at Colorado
Nov.	18	UCLA

UTAH (9-4, 5-4)
Salt Lake City, UT

Aug.	31	North Dakota
Sept.	9	at BYU
Sept.	16	San Jose State
Sept.	22	at Arizona
Oct.	7	Stanford
Oct.	14	at USC
Oct.	21	Arizona State
Oct.	28	at Oregon
Nov.	3	UCLA
Nov.	11	Washington State
Nov.	18	at Washington
Nov.	25	Colorado

WASHINGTON (12-2, 8-1)
Seattle, WA

Sept.	1	at Rutgers
Sept.	9	Montana
Sept.	16	Fresno State
Sept.	23	at Colorado
Sept.	30	at Oregon State
Oct.	7	California
Oct.	14	at Arizona State
Oct.	28	UCLA
Nov.	4	Oregon
Nov.	10	at Stanford
Nov.	18	Utah
Nov.	25	Washington State

WASHINGTON STATE (8-5, 7-2)
Pullman, WA

Sept.	2	Montana State
Sept.	9	Boise State
Sept.	16	Oregon State
Sept.	23	Nevada
Sept.	29	USC
Oct.	7	at Oregon
Oct.	13	at California
Oct.	21	Colorado
Oct.	28	at Arizona
Nov.	4	Stanford
Nov.	11	at Utah
Nov.	25	at Washington

SEC

ALABAMA (14-1, 8-0)
Tuscaloosa, AL

Sept.	2	vs. Florida State #
Sept.	9	Fresno State
Sept.	16	Colorado State
Sept.	23	at Vanderbilt
Sept.	30	Ole Miss
Oct.	7	at Texas A&M
Oct.	14	Arkansas
Oct.	21	Tennessee
Nov.	4	LSU
Nov.	11	at Mississippi State
Nov.	18	Mercer
Nov.	25	at Auburn

#Atlanta, GA

ARKANSAS (7-6, 3-5)
Fayetteville, AR

Sept.	2	vs. Florida A&M #
Sept.	9	TCU
Sept.	23	vs. Texas A&M %
Sept.	30	New Mexico State
Oct.	7	at South Carolina
Oct.	14	at Alabama
Oct.	21	Auburn
Oct.	28	at Ole Miss
Nov.	4	Coastal Carolina
Nov.	11	at LSU
Nov.	18	Mississippi State
Nov.	25	Missouri

#Little Rock, AR %Arlington, TX

Michele: Paul Abell; Gaskin: Craig Mitchelldyer

AUBURN (8-5, 5-3)
Auburn, AL

Sept. 2	Georgia Southern
Sept. 9	at Clemson
Sept. 16	Mercer
Sept. 23	at Missouri
Sept. 30	Mississippi State
Oct. 7	Ole Miss
Oct. 14	at LSU
Oct. 21	at Arkansas
Nov. 4	at Texas A&M
Nov. 11	Georgia
Nov. 18	UL Monroe
Nov. 25	Alabama

FLORIDA (9-4, 6-2)
Gainesville, FL

Sept. 2	vs. Michigan #
Sept. 9	Northern Colorado
Sept. 16	Tennessee
Sept. 23	at Kentucky
Sept. 30	Vanderbilt
Oct. 7	at LSU
Oct. 14	Texas A&M
Oct. 28	vs. Georgia %
Nov. 4	at Missouri
Nov. 11	at South Carolina
Nov. 18	UAB
Nov. 25	Florida State

#Arlington, TX %Jacksonville, FL

GEORGIA (8-5, 4-4)
Athens, GA

Sept. 2	Appalachian State
Sept. 9	at Notre Dame
Sept. 16	Samford
Sept. 23	Mississippi State
Sept. 30	at Tennessee
Oct. 7	at Vanderbilt
Oct. 14	Missouri
Oct. 28	vs. Florida #
Nov. 4	South Carolina
Nov. 11	at Auburn
Nov. 18	Kentucky
Nov. 25	at Georgia Tech

#Jacksonville, FL

KENTUCKY (7-6, 4-4)
Lexington, KY

Sept. 2	at Southern Miss
Sept. 9	Eastern Kentucky
Sept. 16	at South Carolina
Sept. 23	Florida
Sept. 30	Eastern Michigan
Oct. 7	Missouri
Oct. 21	at Mississippi State
Oct. 28	Tennessee
Nov. 4	Ole Miss
Nov. 11	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 18	at Georgia
Nov. 25	Louisville

LSU (8-4, 5-3)
Baton Rouge, LA

Sept. 2	vs. BYU #
Sept. 9	Chattanooga
Sept. 16	at Mississippi State
Sept. 23	Syracuse
Sept. 30	Troy
Oct. 7	Florida
Oct. 14	Auburn
Oct. 21	at Ole Miss
Nov. 4	at Alabama
Nov. 11	Arkansas
Nov. 18	at Tennessee
Nov. 25	Texas A&M

#Houston, TX

MISSISSIPPI STATE (6-7, 3-5)
Starkville, MS

Sept. 2	Charleston Southern
Sept. 9	at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 16	LSU
Sept. 23	at Georgia
Sept. 30	at Auburn
Oct. 14	BYU
Oct. 21	Kentucky
Oct. 28	at Texas A&M
Nov. 4	Massachusetts
Nov. 11	Alabama
Nov. 18	at Arkansas
Nov. 23	Ole Miss

MISSOURI (4-8, 2-6)
Columbia, MO

Sept. 2	Missouri State
Sept. 9	South Carolina
Sept. 16	Purdue
Sept. 23	Auburn
Oct. 7	at Kentucky
Oct. 14	at Georgia
Oct. 21	Idaho
Oct. 28	at Connecticut
Nov. 4	Florida
Nov. 11	Tennessee
Nov. 18	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 25	at Arkansas

OLE MISS (5-7, 2-6)
Oxford, MS

Sept. 2	South Alabama
Sept. 9	Tennessee-Martin
Sept. 16	at California
Sept. 30	at Alabama
Oct. 7	at Auburn
Oct. 14	Vanderbilt
Oct. 21	LSU
Oct. 28	Arkansas
Nov. 4	at Kentucky
Nov. 11	UL Lafayette
Nov. 18	Texas A&M
Nov. 23	at Mississippi State

SOUTH CAROLINA (6-7, 3-5)
Columbia, SC

Sept. 2	vs. NC State #
Sept. 9	at Missouri
Sept. 16	Kentucky
Sept. 23	Louisiana Tech
Sept. 30	at Texas A&M
Oct. 7	Arkansas
Oct. 14	at Tennessee
Oct. 28	Vanderbilt
Nov. 4	at Georgia
Nov. 11	Florida
Nov. 18	Wofford
Nov. 25	Clemson

#Charlotte, NC

TENNESSEE (9-4, 4-4)
Knoxville, TN

Sept. 4	at Georgia Tech #
Sept. 9	Indiana State
Sept. 16	at Florida
Sept. 23	Massachusetts
Sept. 30	Georgia
Oct. 14	South Carolina
Oct. 21	at Alabama
Oct. 28	at Kentucky
Nov. 4	Southern Miss
Nov. 11	at Missouri
Nov. 18	LSU
Nov. 25	Vanderbilt

#Mercedes-Benz Stadium

TEXAS A&M (8-5, 4-4)
College Station, TX

Sept. 3	at UCLA
Sept. 9	Nicholls State
Sept. 16	UL Lafayette
Sept. 23	vs. Arkansas #
Sept. 30	South Carolina
Oct. 7	Alabama
Oct. 14	at Florida
Oct. 28	Mississippi State
Nov. 4	Auburn
Nov. 11	New Mexico
Nov. 18	at Ole Miss
Nov. 25	at LSU

#Arlington, TX

VANDERBILT (6-7, 3-5)
Nashville, TN

Sept. 2	at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 9	Alabama A&M
Sept. 16	Kansas State
Sept. 23	Alabama
Sept. 30	at Florida
Oct. 7	Georgia
Oct. 14	at Ole Miss
Oct. 28	at South Carolina
Nov. 4	Western Kentucky
Nov. 11	Kentucky
Nov. 18	Missouri
Nov. 25	at Tennessee





SUN BELT

APPALACHIAN STATE (10-3, 7-1)
Boone, NC

Sept. 2	at Georgia
Sept. 9	Savannah State
Sept. 16	at Texas State
Sept. 23	Wake Forest
Oct. 7	New Mexico State
Oct. 14	at Idaho
Oct. 21	Coastal Carolina
Oct. 28	at Massachusetts
Nov. 4	at UL Monroe
Nov. 9	Georgia Southern
Nov. 25	at Georgia State
Dec. 2	UL Lafayette

ARKANSAS STATE (8-5, 7-1)
Jonesboro, AR

Sept. 2	at Nebraska
Sept. 9	Miami
Sept. 16	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Sept. 23	at SMU
Oct. 4	at Georgia Southern
Oct. 14	Coastal Carolina
Oct. 19	UL Lafayette
Oct. 28	at New Mexico State
Nov. 11	at South Alabama
Nov. 18	Texas State
Nov. 25	at UL Monroe
Dec. 2	Troy

COASTAL CAROLINA (10-2)
Conway, SC

Sept. 2	Massachusetts
Sept. 16	at UAB
Sept. 23	Western Illinois
Sept. 30	at UL Monroe
Oct. 7	Georgia State
Oct. 14	at Arkansas State
Oct. 21	at Appalachian State
Oct. 28	Texas State
Nov. 4	at Arkansas
Nov. 11	Troy
Nov. 18	at Idaho
Dec. 2	Georgia Southern

GEORGIA SOUTHERN (5-7, 4-4)
Statesboro, GA

Sept. 2	at Auburn
Sept. 9	New Hampshire
Sept. 23	at Indiana
Oct. 4	Arkansas State
Oct. 14	New Mexico State
Oct. 21	at Massachusetts
Oct. 28	at Troy
Nov. 4	Georgia State
Nov. 9	at Appalachian State
Nov. 18	South Alabama
Nov. 25	at UL Lafayette
Dec. 2	at Coastal Carolina

GEORGIA STATE (3-9, 2-6)
Atlanta, GA

Aug. 31	Tennessee State
Sept. 16	at Penn State
Sept. 23	at Charlotte
Sept. 30	Memphis
Oct. 7	at Coastal Carolina
Oct. 14	at UL Monroe
Oct. 21	Troy
Oct. 26	South Alabama
Nov. 4	at Georgia Southern
Nov. 11	at Texas State
Nov. 25	Appalachian State
Dec. 2	Idaho

IDAHO (9-4, 6-2)
Moscow, ID

Aug. 31	Sacramento State
Sept. 9	UNLV
Sept. 16	at Western Michigan
Sept. 23	at South Alabama
Oct. 7	UL Lafayette
Oct. 14	Appalachian State
Oct. 21	at Missouri
Oct. 28	UL Monroe
Nov. 2	at Troy
Nov. 18	Coastal Carolina
Nov. 25	at New Mexico State
Dec. 2	at Georgia State

UL LAFAYETTE (6-7, 5-3)
Lafayette, LA

Sept. 2	SE Louisiana
Sept. 9	at Tulsa
Sept. 16	at Texas A&M
Sept. 23	UL Monroe
Oct. 7	at Idaho
Oct. 12	Texas State
Oct. 19	at Arkansas State
Nov. 4	at South Alabama
Nov. 11	at Ole Miss
Nov. 18	New Mexico State
Nov. 25	Georgia Southern
Dec. 2	at Appalachian State

UL MONROE (4-8, 3-5)
Monroe, LA

Aug. 31	at Memphis
Sept. 9	at FSU
Sept. 16	Southern Miss
Sept. 23	at UL Lafayette
Sept. 30	Coastal Carolina
Oct. 7	at Texas State
Oct. 14	Georgia State
Oct. 21	at South Alabama
Oct. 28	at Idaho
Nov. 4	Appalachian State
Nov. 18	at Auburn
Nov. 25	Arkansas State

NEW MEXICO STATE (3-9, 2-6)
Las Cruces, NM

Aug. 31	at Arizona State
Sept. 9	at New Mexico
Sept. 16	Troy
Sept. 23	UTEP
Sept. 30	at Arkansas
Oct. 7	at Appalachian State
Oct. 14	at Georgia Southern
Oct. 28	Arkansas State
Nov. 4	at Texas State
Nov. 18	at UL Lafayette
Nov. 25	Idaho
Dec. 2	South Alabama

SOUTH ALABAMA (6-7, 2-6)
Mobile, AL

Sept. 2	at Ole Miss
Sept. 9	Oklahoma State
Sept. 16	Alabama A&M
Sept. 23	Idaho
Sept. 30	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 11	at Troy
Oct. 21	UL Monroe
Oct. 26	at Georgia State
Nov. 4	UL Lafayette
Nov. 11	Arkansas State
Nov. 18	at Georgia Southern
Dec. 2	at New Mexico State

TEXAS STATE (2-10, 0-8)
San Marcos, TX

Sept. 2	Houston Baptist
Sept. 9	at Colorado
Sept. 16	Appalachian State
Sept. 23	UTSA
Sept. 30	at Wyoming
Oct. 7	UL Monroe
Oct. 12	at UL Lafayette
Oct. 28	at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 4	New Mexico State
Nov. 11	Georgia State
Nov. 18	at Arkansas State
Nov. 25	at Troy

TROY (10-3, 6-2)
Troy, AL

Sept. 2	at Boise State
Sept. 9	Alabama State
Sept. 16	at New Mexico State
Sept. 23	Akron
Sept. 30	at LSU
Oct. 11	South Alabama
Oct. 21	at Georgia State
Oct. 28	Georgia Southern
Nov. 2	Idaho
Nov. 11	at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 25	Texas State
Dec. 2	at Arkansas State

INDEPENDENTS

ARMY (8-5)
West Point, NY

Sept. 1	Fordham
Sept. 9	Buffalo
Sept. 16	at Ohio State
Sept. 23	at Tulane
Sept. 30	UTEP
Oct. 7	at Rice
Oct. 14	Eastern Michigan
Oct. 21	Temple
Nov. 4	at Air Force
Nov. 11	Duke
Nov. 18	at North Texas
Dec. 9	vs. Navy #

#Philadelphia, PA

BYU (9-4)
Provo, UT

Aug. 26	Portland State
Sept. 2	vs. LSU #
Sept. 9	Utah
Sept. 16	Wisconsin
Sept. 29	at Utah State
Oct. 6	Boise State
Oct. 14	at Mississippi State
Oct. 21	at East Carolina
Oct. 28	San Jose State
Nov. 4	at Fresno State
Nov. 10	at UNLV
Nov. 18	Massachusetts
Nov. 25	at Hawaii

#Houston, TX

MASSACHUSETTS (2-10)
Amherst, MA

Aug. 26	Hawaii
Sept. 2	at Coastal Carolina
Sept. 9	Old Dominion
Sept. 15	at Temple
Sept. 23	at Tennessee
Sept. 30	Ohio
Oct. 14	at South Florida
Oct. 21	Georgia Southern
Oct. 28	Appalachian State
Nov. 4	at Mississippi State
Nov. 11	vs. Maine #
Nov. 18	at BYU

#Boston, MA

NOTRE DAME (4-8)
South Bend, IN

Sept. 2	Temple
Sept. 9	Georgia
Sept. 16	at Boston College
Sept. 23	at Michigan State
Sept. 30	Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 7	at North Carolina
Oct. 21	USC
Oct. 28	NC State
Nov. 4	Wake Forest
Nov. 11	at Miami (Fla.)
Nov. 18	Navy
Nov. 25	at Stanford

SIDELINE SPIRIT

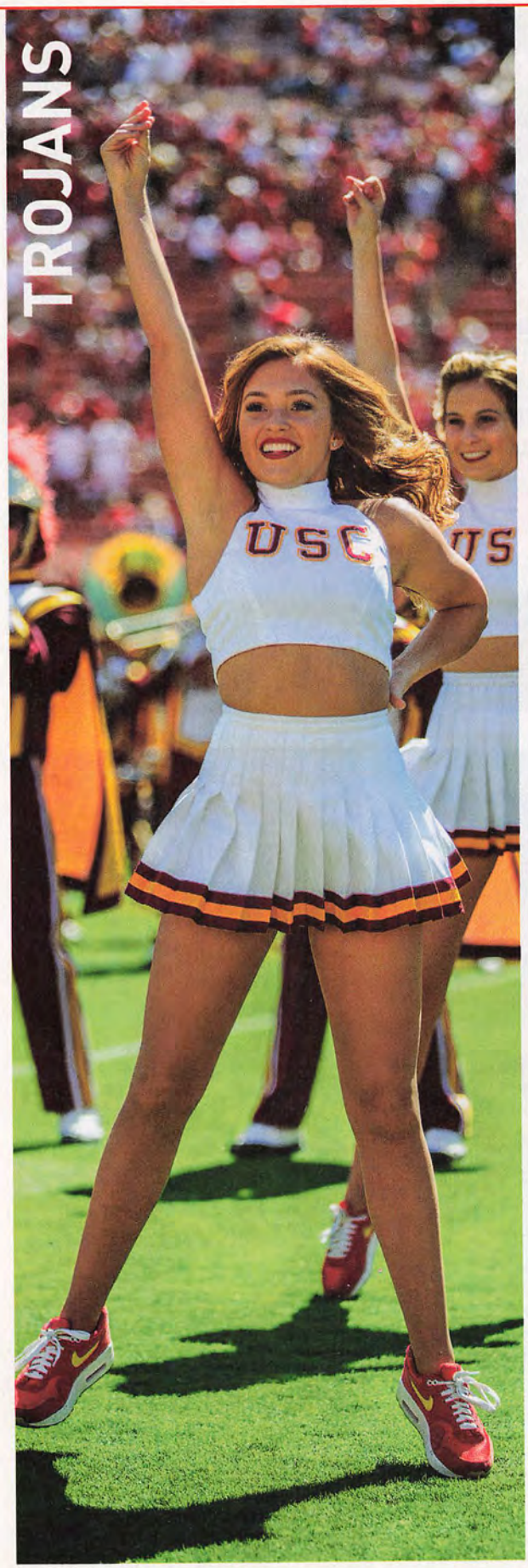








Nebraska, Louisville, Ole Miss, Clemson: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Sanford, USC: Peter Brouillet; Kansas: Tim Umphrey


TROJANS
USC


Ole Miss
REBELS


KU
JAYHAWKS







Ga Tech, Auburn, UNC: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Missouri: Tim Umphrey; Purdue: ylp Boston College, NC State: Margaret Bowles

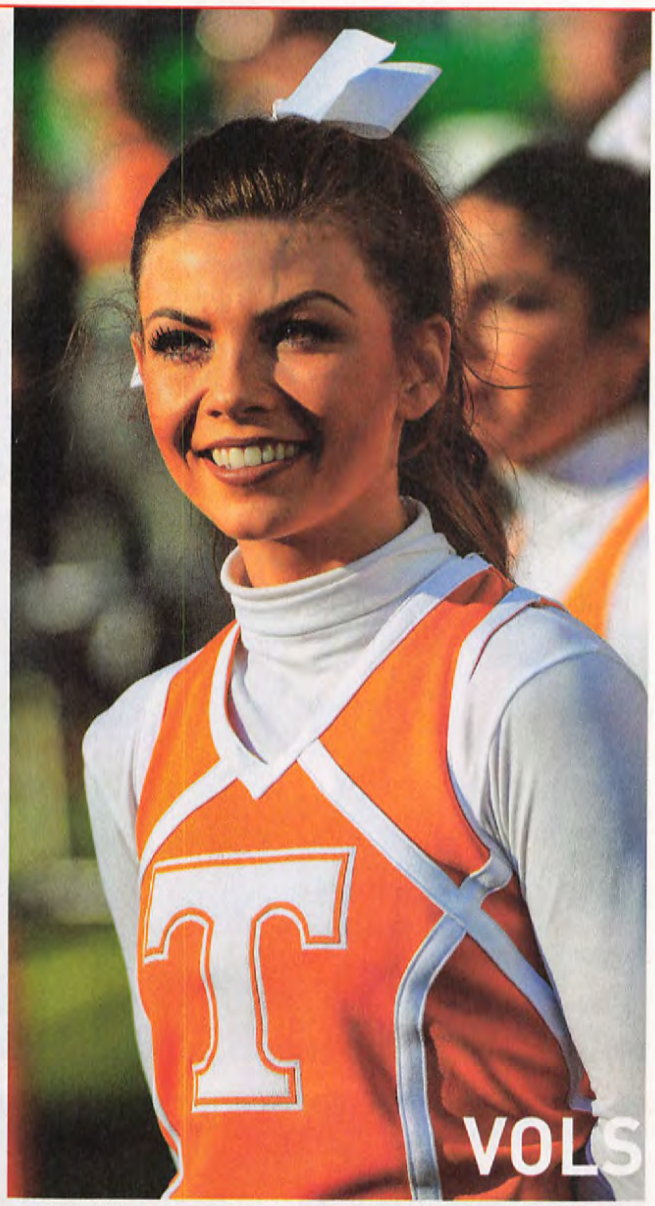

TAR HEELS


BOILERMAKERS


EAGLES
EAGLES
EAGLES


NCSU
WOLFPACK

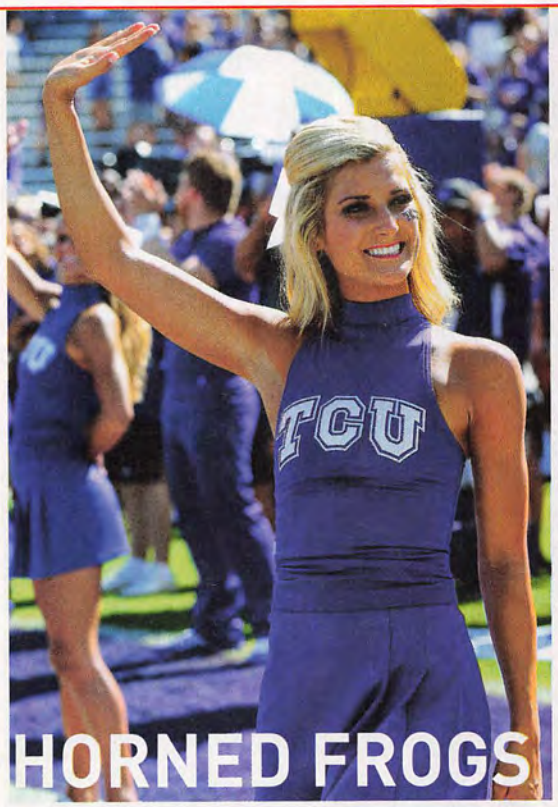




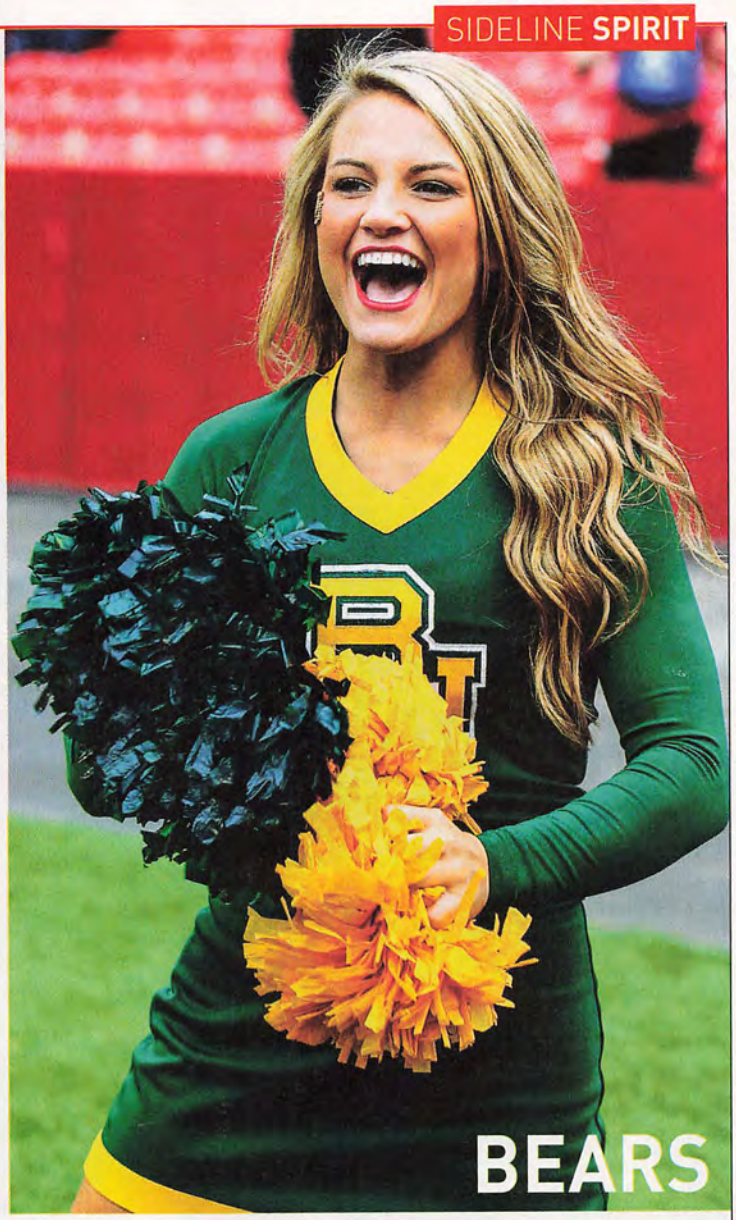




Oklahoma State, Baylor, Kansas State: Tim Umphrey; Tennessee, Mississippi State, Pitt: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Minnesota: Bruce Schwartzman



HORNED FROGS



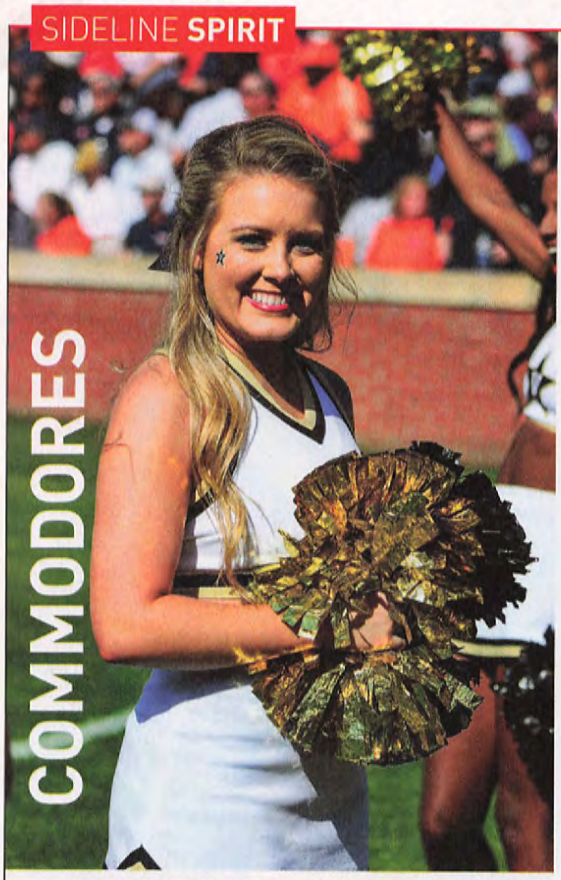
BEARS



WILDCATS



PANTHERS



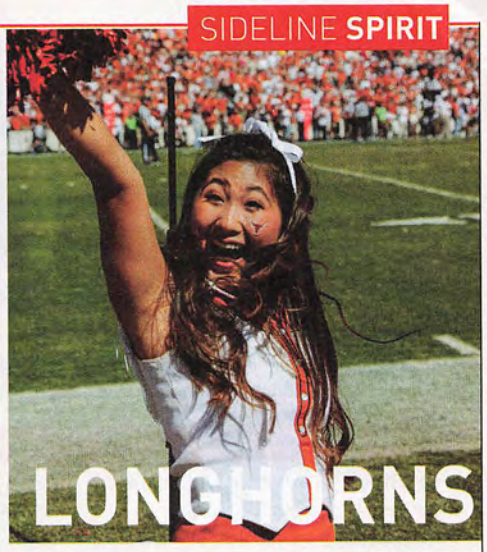


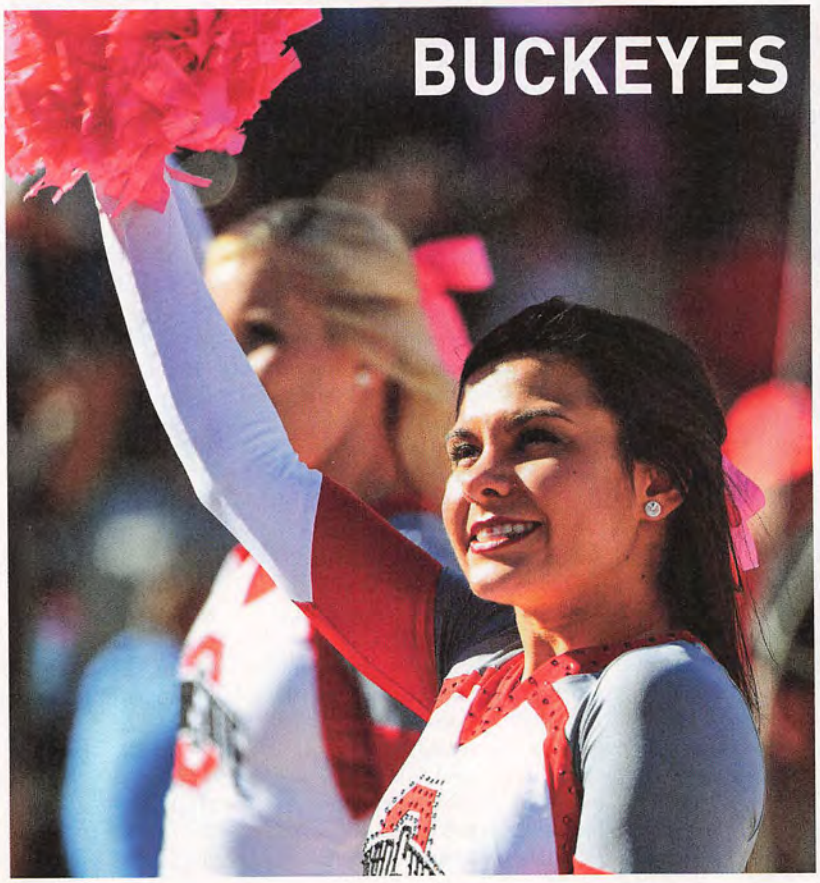


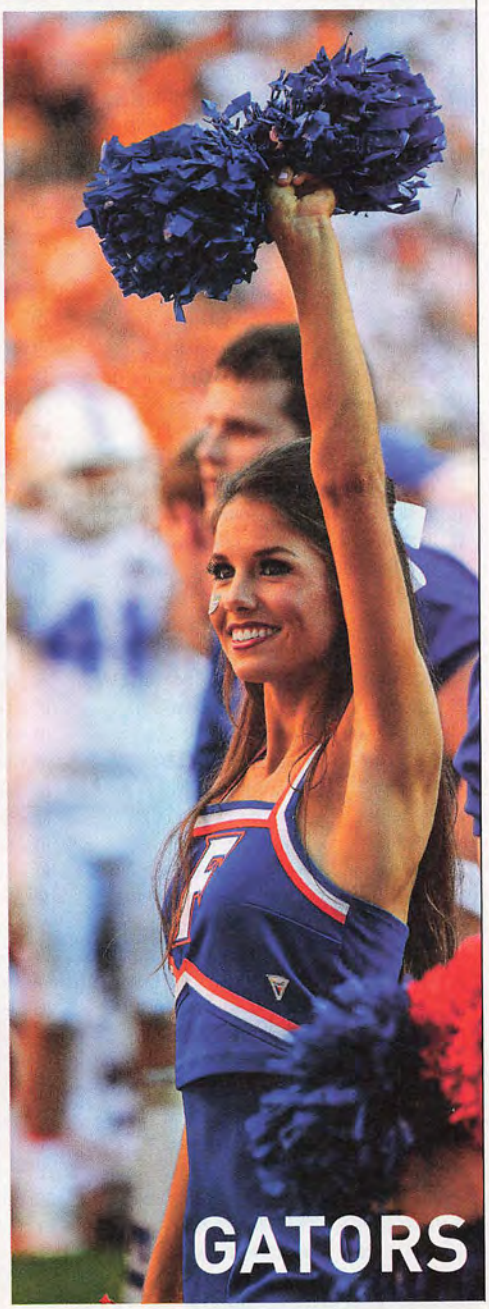


Vanderbilt, Ohio State, Florida: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; UCLA: Peter Brouillet; Oregon: Craig Mitchelldyer; Northwestern: Tom Lynn; Miami: Tom DiPace; Texas: Chris Covatta


HURRICANES


LONGHORNS


BUCKEYES


GATORS

TOP 200 RECRUITING REPORT

presented by Wrangler

RANKINGS PROVIDED BY 247COMPOSITE

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Jaelan Phillips	Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA)	DE	6-6	253	UCLA
2.	Cam Akers	Clinton (Clinton, MS)	RB	5-11	213	Florida State
3.	Najee Harris	Antioch (Antioch, CA)	RB	6-3	226	Alabama
4.	Alex Leatherwood	Washington (Pensacola, FL)	OT	6-6	327	Alabama
5.	Foster Sarell	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	OT	6-7	311	Stanford
6.	Marvin Wilson	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	DT	6-4	329	Florida State
7.	Jeffrey Okudah	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	CB	6-2	190	Ohio State
8.	Chase Young	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	DE	6-5	251	Ohio State
9.	Joshua Kaindoh	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DE	6-6	250	Florida State
10.	Walker Little	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	OT	6-7	315	Stanford
11.	Baron Browning	Kennedale (Kennedale, TX)	LB	6-2	229	Ohio State
12.	Donovan Peoples-Jones	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	WR	6-2	193	Michigan
13.	Dylan Moses	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LB	6-3	310	Alabama
14.	Trey Smith	University School (Jackson, TN)	OT	6-4	310	Tennessee
15.	Davis Mills	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	QB	6-3	192	Stanford
16.	Isaiah Wilson	Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY)	OT	6-7	350	Georgia
17.	Shaun Wade	Trinity Christian (Jacksonville, FL)	CB	6-1	177	Ohio State
18.	JaCoby Stevens	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	S	6-1	200	LSU
19.	Tee Higgins	Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN)	WR	6-5	188	Clemson
20.	Stephen Carr	Summit (Fontana, CA)	RB	6-0	202	USC
21.	Jerry Jeudy	Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL)	WR	6-1	177	Alabama
22.	Richard LeCounte III	Liberty County (Hinesville, GA)	S	5-11	174	Georgia
23.	Darnay Holmes	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	CB	5-10	190	UCLA
24.	Wyatt Davis	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	OG	6-5	310	Ohio State
25.	Aubrey Solomon	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	DT	6-3	288	Michigan
26.	LaBryan Ray	James Clemens (Madison, AL)	DE	6-4	260	Alabama
27.	Calvin Ashley	St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.)	OT	6-6	310	Auburn
28.	Khalan Laborn	Bishop Sullivan (Virginia Beach, VA)	RB	5-10	199	Florida State
29.	A.J. Epenesa	Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL)	DE	6-5	260	Iowa
30.	Hunter Johnson	Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN)	QB	6-2	201	Clemson
31.	Joseph Lewis	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	WR	6-2	204	USC
32.	Tua Tagovailoa	St. Louis (Honolulu, HI)	QB	6-1	212	Alabama
33.	D'Andre Swift	St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA)	RB	5-9	212	Georgia
34.	Jedrick Wills	Lafayette (Lexington, KY)	OT	6-5	218	Alabama
35.	Austin Jackson	North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ)	OT	6-6	280	USC
36.	Colby Parkinson	Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA)	TE	6-7	228	Stanford
37.	K'Lavon Chaisson	North Shore (Houston, TX)	DE	6-4	220	LSU
38.	Stanford Samuels	Charles W. Flanagan (Hollywood, FL)	CB	6-2	175	Florida State
39.	Trevon Grimes	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	WR	6-3	202	Ohio State
40.	Jeff Thomas	East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL)	WR	5-10	175	Miami (Fla.)
41.	Jay Tufele	Bingham (South Jordan, UT)	DT	6-3	297	USC
42.	Andrew Thomas	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	OT	6-5	335	Georgia
43.	J.K. Dobbins	La Grange (La Grange, TX)	RB	5-10	199	Ohio State
44.	Cesar Ruiz	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	C	6-3	315	Michigan
45.	Devon Hunter	Indian River (Chesapeake, VA)	S	6-1	205	Virginia Tech
46.	Lamont Wade	Clairton (Clairton, PA)	CB	5-9	190	Penn State
47.	Jake Fromm	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	QB	6-1	229	Georgia
48.	Austin Deculus	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	OT	6-6	331	LSU
49.	DeAngelo Gibbs	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	S	6-2	204	Georgia
50.	Tyjon Lindsey	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	WR	5-9	161	Nebraska
51.	D.J. Matthews	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	WR	5-11	160	Florida State
52.	Tyler Shelvin	Notre Dame (Crowley, LA)	DT	6-3	376	LSU
53.	Paris Ford	Steel Valley (Munhall, PA)	S	6-1	180	Pittsburgh
54.	Josh Myers	Miamisburg (Miamisburg, OH)	OG	6-6	306	Ohio State
55.	A.J. Terrell	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	CB	6-2	180	Clemson
56.	Luiji Vilain	Episcopal (Alexandria, VA)	DE	6-4	242	Michigan
57.	Tate Martell	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	QB	5-11	203	Ohio State
58.	Xavier McKinney	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	S	6-1	192	Alabama
59.	Isaiah Pryor	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	S	6-2	195	Ohio State
60.	Marlon Tuipulotu	Central (Independence, OR)	DT	6-2	295	USC
61.	Bubba Bolden	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	S	6-2	192	USC
62.	Jacob Phillips	East Magnet School (Nashville, TN)	LB	6-4	228	LSU
63.	Anthony Hines	Plano East (Plano, TX)	LB	6-3	222	Texas A&M
64.	Devonta Smith	Amite (Amite, LA)	WR	6-1	160	Alabama
65.	Grant Delpit	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	S	6-4	181	LSU
66.	Deommodore Lenoir	Salesian (Los Angeles, CA)	CB	5-11	191	Oregon
67.	Brock Wright	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	TE	6-5	243	Notre Dame
68.	Ty Chandler	MBA (Nashville, TN)	RB	5-11	187	Tennessee
69.	Tedarrell Slaton	American Heritage (Plantation, FL)	OG	6-5	360	Florida
70.	Haskell Garrett	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	DT	6-2	288	Ohio State
71.	Navaughn Donaldson	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	OT	6-6	335	Miami (Fla.)
72.	D.J. Johnson	Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA)	DE	6-5	240	Miami (Fla.)
73.	Willie Gay	Starkville (Starkville, MS)	LB	6-2	223	Miss. State
74.	Jamyest Williams	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	CB	5-9	174	South Carolina
75.	Jhamon Ausbon	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	WR	6-3	217	Texas A&M
76.	Jack Anderson	Frisco (Frisco, TX)	OG	6-5	300	Texas Tech
77.	Henry Ruggs III	Robert E. Lee (Montgomery, AL)	WR	6-0	175	Alabama
78.	Maleik Gray	LaVergne (LaVergne, TN)	S	6-2	190	Tennessee
79.	Justin Broiles	John Marshall (Oklahoma City, OK)	CB	6-0	175	Oklahoma
80.	Drew Singleton	Paramus Catholic (Paramus, NJ)	LB	6-2	215	Michigan
81.	Robert Hainsey	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	OG	6-5	276	Notre Dame
82.	Thomas Graham	Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)	CB	5-11	175	Oregon
83.	VanDarius Cowan	Palm Beach Gardens (Palm Beach Gardens, FL)	LB	6-4	226	Alabama
84.	Cole Kmet	St. Viator (Arlington Heights, IL)	TE	6-5	230	Notre Dame
85.	Jaylon Johnson	Central East (Fresno, CA)	CB	6-1	181	Utah
86.	Todd Harris	Plaquemine (Plaquemine, LA)	S	6-0	180	LSU
87.	C.J. Thorpe	Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA)	OG	6-3	318	Penn State
88.	Tyrell Shavers	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	WR	6-6	196	Alabama
89.	Netori Johnson	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	OG	6-3	341	Georgia
90.	Kary Vincent	Memorial (Port Arthur, TX)	CB	5-11	170	LSU
91.	Jalen Reagor	Waxahachie (Waxahachie, TX)	WR	5-11	195	TCU
92.	Levi Jones	Westlake (Austin, TX)	LB	6-3	215	USC
93.	Jarez Parks	Sebastian River (Sebastian, FL)	DE	6-3	253	Alabama
94.	Ambry Thomas	Martin Luther King (Detroit, MI)	CB	6-0	174	Michigan
95.	Jake Moretti	Pomona (Arvada, CO)	OT	6-5	285	Colorado
96.	Cyrus Fagan	Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL)	S	6-2	182	Florida State
97.	Robert Barnes	Carroll (Southlake, TX)	S	6-3	194	Oklahoma
98.	Markail Benton	Central (Phenix City, AL)	LB	6-2	237	Alabama
99.	Phidarian Mathis	Neville (Monroe, LA)	DT	6-4	287	Alabama
100.	Anthony McFarland	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	RB	5-9	203	Maryland

TOP 200 RECRUITING REPORT

presented by Wrangler

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
101.	Tyrese Robinson	Boyd (McKinney, TX)	OG	6-4	310	Oklahoma
102.	Greg Johnson	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	ATH	5-10	185	USC
103.	T.D. Moultry	Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, AL)	LB	6-2	225	Auburn
104.	Jack Sears	San Clemente (San Clemente, CA)	QB	6-3	200	USC
105.	Robert Beal	Peachtree Ridge (Suwanee, GA)	DE	6-4	230	Georgia
106.	Christopher Allen	Southern Lab School (Baton Rouge, LA)	LB	6-4	234	Alabama
107.	Jordan Anthony	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LB	6-0	220	Michigan
108.	Kellen Mond	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	QB	6-3	201	Texas A&M
109.	Paulson Adebo	Mansfield (Mansfield, TX)	CB	6-2	180	Stanford
110.	Salvon Ahmed	Juanita (Kirkland, WA)	ATH	6-0	185	Washington
111.	Hamsah Nasirildeen	Concord (Concord, NC)	S	6-3	210	Florida State
112.	Alijah Vera-Tucker	Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA)	OT	6-4	291	USC
113.	Chuck Filiaga	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	OT	6-6	335	Michigan
114.	James Robinson	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	WR	6-4	205	Florida
115.	Amari Rodgers	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	WR	5-10	221	Clemson
116.	Isaiah Pola-Mao	Mountain Pointe (Phoenix, AZ)	S	6-4	200	USC
117.	Tylan Wallace	South Hills (Fort Worth, TX)	WR	6-0	179	Oklahoma State
118.	Daniel Wright	Boyd Anderson (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	S	6-1	187	Alabama
119.	Sam Ehlinger	Westlake (Austin, TX)	QB	6-2	215	Texas
120.	Greg Rogers	Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV)	DT	6-3	305	UCLA
121.	Joshua Lugg	North Allegheny (Wexford, PA)	OT	6-7	293	Notre Dame
122.	Tarik Black	Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT)	WR	6-4	208	Michigan
123.	Dylan McCaffrey	Valor Christian (Littleton, CO)	QB	6-5	196	Michigan
124.	Levi Draper	Collinsville (Collinsville, OK)	LB	6-4	222	Oklahoma
125.	Jeremiah Holloman	Newton (Covington, GA)	WR	6-2	195	Georgia
126.	Brendon White	Olentangy Liberty (Powell, OH)	ATH	6-2	200	Ohio State
127.	Zachary Carter	Hillsborough (Tampa, FL)	DE	6-5	250	Florida
128.	Addison Gumbs	Stellar Prep (Hayward, CA)	DE	6-4	220	Oklahoma
129.	Hunter Echols	Cathedral (Los Angeles, CA)	DE	6-4	231	USC
130.	OrTre Smith	Wando (Mount Pleasant, SC)	WR	6-3	215	South Carolina
131.	D.D. Bowie	Morton (Morton, MS)	WR	6-1	170	Ole Miss
132.	Micah Clark	St. John Vianney (Holmdel, NJ)	OT	6-5	265	Rutgers
133.	Osiris St. Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	WR	6-2	181	Stanford
134.	Mark Webb	Archbishop Wood (Warminster, PA)	WR	6-2	195	Georgia
135.	Christopher Henderson	Columbus (Miami, FL)	CB	6-1	175	Florida
136.	Nico Collins	Clay-Chalkville (Pinson, AL)	WR	6-5	195	Michigan
137.	Jaden Hunter	Westlake (Atlanta GA)	LB	6-2	212	Georgia
138.	Elijah Blades	John Muir (Pasadena, CA)	CB	6-2	170	Nebraska
139.	Eno Benjamin	Wylie East (Wylie, TX)	RB	5-10	204	Arizona State
140.	Josh Falo	Inderkum (Sacramento, CA)	TE	6-5	235	USC
141.	Ja'len Parks	Newberry (Newberry, FL)	DT	6-3	288	Florida State
142.	Zaquandre White	North Fort Myers (North Fort Myers, FL)	RB	6-0	210	Florida State
143.	Chevin Calloway	Bishop Dunne (Dallas, TX)	CB	5-10	180	Arkansas
144.	Tre Brown	Union (Tulsa, OK)	CB	5-11	178	Oklahoma
145.	Myles Brennan	St. Stanislaus (Bay St. Louis, MS)	QB	6-3	180	LSU
146.	Tray Bishop	Terrell County (Dawson, GA)	CB	6-2	200	Georgia
147.	Jonah Melton	Eastern Alamance (Mebane, NC)	OG	6-4	295	North Carolina
148.	Malik Herring	Mary Persons (Forsyth, GA)	DE	6-4	265	Georgia
149.	Darnell Ewell	Lake Taylor (Norfolk, VA)	DT	6-4	295	Notre Dame
150.	Brian Robinson	Hillcrest (Tuscaloosa, AL)	RB	6-1	224	Alabama
151.	Justin Foster	Crest (Shelby, NC)	DE	6-4	250	Clemson
152.	Damion Miller	John Tyler (Tyler, TX)	WR	6-1	193	Texas
153.	Brad Stewart	McDonogh 35 (New Orleans, LA)	CB	6-0	194	Florida
154.	Chaz Ah You	Timpview (Provo, UT)	S	6-2	199	BYU
155.	Alex Perry	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	CB	5-11	178	Arizona State
156.	CeeDee Lamb	Foster (Richmond, TX)	WR	6-3	172	Oklahoma
157.	Lynn Bowden	Warren G. Harding (Youngstown, OH)	ATH	6-1	185	Kentucky
158.	Toneil Carter	Langham Creek (Houston, TX)	RB	5-11	197	Texas
159.	Derrick Tucker	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	S	6-2	194	Texas A&M
160.	Cordarrian Richardson	Trezevant (Memphis, TN)	RB	5-11	220	UCF
161.	Omar Manning	Lancaster (Lancaster, TX)	WR	6-2	214	TCU
162.	Nick Brahms	Navarre (Navarre, FL)	OG	6-4	285	Auburn
163.	Montaric Brown	Ashdown (Ashdown, AR)	S	6-0	182	Arkansas
164.	Hunter Bryant	Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA)	TE	6-3	238	Washington
165.	Nate McBride	Vidalia Comprehensive (Vidalia, GA)	LB	6-1	223	Georgia
166.	Devan Barrett	Tampa Catholic (Tampa, FL)	RB	6-0	190	Auburn
167.	Wes Harris	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	OG	6-4	290	TCU
168.	Keytaon Thompson	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	QB	6-4	225	Miss. State
169.	Charleston Rambo	Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX)	WR	6-2	170	Oklahoma
170.	Oliver Martin	West Senior (Iowa City, IA)	WR	6-1	188	Michigan
171.	Aaron Banks	El Cerrito (El Cerrito, CA)	OT	6-7	315	Notre Dame
172.	Avery Roberts	Concord (Wilmington, DE)	LB	6-1	220	Nebraska
173.	Connor Wedington	Sumner (Sumner, WA)	ATH	6-0	189	Stanford
174.	Jake Lawler	South Mecklenburg (Charlotte, NC)	DE	6-4	225	North Carolina
175.	Deon Jones	Potomac (Oxon Hill, MD)	CB	6-1	180	Maryland
176.	Jordan Williams	Frank W. Cox (Virginia Beach, VA)	DE	6-5	260	Clemson
177.	Leonard Warner	Brookwood (Snellville, GA)	LB	6-4	226	Florida State
178.	Chris Robison	Horn (Mesquite, TX)	QB	6-2	192	Oklahoma
179.	Chadarius Townsend	Tanner (Tanner, AL)	ATH	6-0	190	Alabama
180.	Hezekiah Jones	Stafford (Stafford, TX)	WR	6-0	193	Texas A&M
181.	Markaviest Bryant	Crisp County (Cordele, GA)	DE	6-4	226	Auburn
182.	Nathan Proctor	Henry E. Lackey (Indian Head, MD)	LB	6-3	200	Virginia Tech
183.	Amir Riep	Colerain (Cincinnati, OH)	CB	5-11	185	Ohio State
184.	Jaylen Harris	Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH)	WR	6-5	210	Ohio State
185.	Trey Sermon	Sprayberry (Marietta, GA)	RB	6-1	215	Oklahoma
186.	Austin Troxell	Madison Academy (Madison, AL)	OT	6-7	335	Auburn
187.	Elijah Molden	West Linn (West Linn, OR)	CB	5-11	185	Washington
188.	Kendall Randolph	Bob Jones (Madison, AL)	OG	6-4	310	Alabama
189.	William Poole II	Hapeville Charter (Atlanta, GA)	CB	6-0	180	Georgia
190.	Sean Clifford	St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH)	QB	6-2	210	Penn State
191.	Markquese Bell	Bridgeton (Bridgeton, NJ)	ATH	6-3	194	Maryland
192.	Jaylon Redd	Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)	CB	5-9	180	Oregon
193.	N'Kosi Perry	Vanguard (Ocala, FL)	QB	6-4	176	Miami (Fla.)
194.	Edward Ingram	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	OG	6-4	325	LSU
195.	Marcus Williamson	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	CB	5-9	180	Ohio State
196.	Henry Bainivalu	Skyline (Sammamish, WA)	OT	6-6	290	Washington
197.	Shawn Robinson	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	QB	6-2	215	TCU
198.	Marco Wilson	American Heritage (Plantation, FL)	CB	6-0	180	Florida
199.	Taquon Graham	Temple (Temple, TX)	DE	6-3	255	Texas
200.	Walter Grant	Cairo (Cairo, GA)	LB	6-4	236	Georgia

BY POSITION RECRUITING REPORT

RANKINGS PROVIDED BY 247COMPOSITE

presented by Wrangler

QUARTERBACKS

	Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Davis Mills	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	6-3	192	Stanford
2.	Hunter Johnson	Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN)	6-2	201	Clemson
3.	Tua Tagovailoa	St. Louis (Honolulu, HI)	6-1	212	Alabama
4.	Jake Fromm	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	6-1	229	Georgia
5.	Tate Martell	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	5-11	203	Ohio State
6.	Jack Sears	San Clemente (San Clemente, CA)	6-3	200	USC
7.	Kellen Mond	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-3	201	Texas A&M
8.	Sam Ehlinger	Westlake (Austin, TX)	6-2	215	Texas
9.	Dylan McCaffrey	Valor Christian (Highlands Ranch, CO)	6-5	196	Michigan
10.	Myles Brennan	St. Stanislaus (Bay St. Louis, MS)	6-3	180	LSU
11.	Keytaon Thompson	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	6-4	225	Mississippi State
12.	Chris Robison	Horn (Mesquite, TX)	6-2	192	Oklahoma
13.	Sean Clifford	St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH)	6-2	210	Penn State
14.	N'Kosi Perry	Vanguard (Ocala, FL)	6-4	176	Miami (Fla.)
15.	Shawn Robinson	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	6-2	215	TCU
16.	Tristan Gebbia	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	6-3	180	Nebraska
17.	Kasim Hill	St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.)	6-3	215	Maryland
18.	Avery Davis	Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX)	5-11	192	Notre Dame
19.	Lowell Narcisse	St. James (St. James, LA)	6-3	224	LSU
20.	Chase Brice	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	6-2	207	Clemson
21.	Mac Jones	The Bolles School (Jacksonville, FL)	6-2	180	Alabama
22.	Bailey Hockman	McEachern (Powder Springs, GA)	6-2	192	Florida State
23.	Braxton Burmeister	La Jolla Country Day (La Jolla, CA)	6-1	196	Oregon
24.	Hendon Hooker	Dudley (Greensboro, NC)	6-4	204	Virginia Tech
25.	Chase Garbers	Corona del Mar (Newport Beach, CA)	6-3	205	Cal
26.	Tommy DeVito	Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ)	6-2	193	Syracuse
27.	Ryan Kelley	Basha (Chandler, AZ)	6-3	188	Arizona State
28.	Danny Clark	Archbishop Hoban (Akron, OH)	6-4	223	Kentucky
29.	James Blackman	Glades Central (Belle Glade, FL)	6-5	163	Florida State
30.	Daulton Hyatt	Etowah (Attalla, AL)	6-4	182	Arkansas

WIDE RECEIVERS

	Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Donovan Peoples-Jones	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	6-2	193	Michigan
2.	Tee Higgins	Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN)	6-5	188	Clemson
3.	Jerry Jeudy	Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL)	6-1	177	Alabama
4.	Joseph Lewis	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	6-2	204	USC
5.	Trevon Grimes	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-3	202	Ohio State
6.	Jeff Thomas	East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL)	5-10	175	Miami (Fla.)
7.	Tyjon Lindsey	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	5-9	161	Nebraska
8.	D.J. Matthews	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	5-11	160	Florida State
9.	Devonta Smith	Amite (Amite, LA)	6-1	160	Alabama
10.	Jhamon Ausbon	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-3	217	Texas A&M
11.	Henry Ruggs III	Robert E. Lee (Montgomery, AL)	6-0	175	Alabama
12.	Tyrell Shavers	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	6-6	196	Alabama
13.	Jalen Reagor	Waxahachie (Waxahachie, TX)	5-11	195	TCU
14.	James Robinson	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	6-4	205	Florida
15.	Amari Rodgers	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	5-10	221	Clemson
16.	Tylan Wallace	South Hills (Fort Worth, TX)	6-0	179	Oklahoma State
17.	Tarik Black	Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT)	6-4	208	Michigan
18.	Jeremiah Holloman	Newton (Covington, GA)	6-2	195	Georgia
19.	OrTre Smith	Wando (Mount Pleasant, SC)	6-3	215	South Carolina
20.	D.D. Bowie	Morton (Morton, MS)	6-1	170	Ole Miss
21.	Osiris St. Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	6-2	181	Stanford
22.	Mark Webb	Archbishop Wood (Warminster, PA)	6-2	195	Georgia
23.	Nico Collins	Clay-Chalkville (Pinson, AL)	6-5	195	Michigan
24.	Damion Miller	John Tyler (Tyler, TX)	6-1	193	Texas
25.	CeeDee Lamb	Foster (Richmond, TX)	6-3	172	Oklahoma
26.	Omar Manning	Lancaster (Lancaster, TX)	6-2	214	TCU
27.	Charleston Rambo	Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX)	6-2	170	Oklahoma
28.	Oliver Martin	West Senior (Iowa City, IA)	6-1	188	Michigan
29.	Hezekiah Jones	Stafford (Stafford, TX)	6-0	193	Texas A&M
30.	Jaylen Harris	Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH)	6-5	210	Ohio State

RUNNING BACKS

	Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Cam Akers	Clinton (Clinton, MS)	5-11	213	Florida State
2.	Najee Harris	Antioch (Antioch, CA)	6-3	226	Alabama
3.	Stephen Carr	Summit (Fontana, CA)	6-0	202	USC
4.	Khalan Laborn	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	5-10	199	Florida State
5.	D'Andre Swift	St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA)	5-9	212	Georgia
6.	J.K. Dobbins	La Grange (La Grange, TX)	5-10	199	Ohio State
7.	Ty Chandler	MBA (Nashville, TN)	5-11	187	Tennessee
8.	Anthony McFarland	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	5-9	203	Maryland
9.	Eno Benjamin	Wylie East (Wylie, TX)	5-10	204	Arizona State
10.	Zaquandre White	North Fort Myers (North Fort Myers, FL)	6-0	210	Florida State
11.	Brian Robinson	Hillcrest (Tuscaloosa, AL)	6-1	224	Alabama
12.	Toneil Carter	Langham Creek (Houston, TX)	5-11	197	Texas
13.	Cordarrian Richardson	Trezevant (Memphis, TN)	5-11	220	UCF
14.	Devan Barrett	Tampa Catholic (Tampa, FL)	6-0	190	Auburn
15.	Trey Sermon	Sprayberry (Marietta, GA)	6-1	215	Oklahoma
16.	Kytin Hill	Columbus (Columbus, MS)	5-11	210	Mississippi State
17.	Sione Heimuli-Lund	Brighton (Salt Lake City, UT)	6-1	237	Stanford
18.	Kennedy Brooks	Mansfield (Mansfield, TX)	6-0	197	Oklahoma
19.	Travis Etienne	Jennings (Jennings, LA)	5-11	210	Clemson
20.	Nathan Tilford	Colony (Ontario, CA)	6-2	190	Arizona
21.	Colin Wilson	Clay (Green Cove Springs, FL)	6-1	220	Louisville
22.	A.J. Davis	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	5-11	190	Pittsburgh
23.	C.J. Holmes	Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT)	6-0	200	Notre Dame
24.	D'Maury Samuels	Los Lunas (Los Lunas, NM)	5-11	190	Michigan
25.	Todd Sibley	Archbishop Hoban (Akron, OH)	5-10	214	Pittsburgh
26.	Chase Hayden	St. George's (Collierville, TN)	5-10	189	Arkansas
27.	Chuba Hubbard	Bev Facey (Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada)	6-1	190	Oklahoma State
28.	Jonathan Taylor	Salem (Salem, NJ)	6-0	211	Wisconsin
29.	Clyde Edwards-Helaire	Catholic (Baton Rouge, LA)	5-7	191	LSU
30.	Kaegun Williams	Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX)	5-9	190	San Diego State

TIGHT ENDS

	Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Colby Parkinson	Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA)	6-7	228	Stanford
2.	Brock Wright	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	6-5	243	Notre Dame
3.	Cole Kmet	St. Viator (Arlington Heights, IL)	6-5	230	Notre Dame
4.	Josh Falo	Inderkum (Sacramento, CA)	6-5	235	USC
5.	Hunter Bryant	Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA)	6-3	238	Washington
6.	Grant Calcaterra	Santa Margarita Catholic (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA)	6-4	207	Oklahoma
7.	Matt Dotson	Archbishop Moeller (Cincinnati, OH)	6-5	235	Michigan State
8.	Charles Reeves	Steubenville (Steubenville, OH)	6-5	230	Pittsburgh
9.	Major Tennison	Bullard (Bullard, TX)	6-6	230	Alabama
10.	Kemore Gamble	Miami Southridge (Miami, FL)	6-4	216	Florida



AP



OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1. Alex Leatherwood	Washington (Pensacola, FL)	6-6	327	Alabama
2. Foster Sarell	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	6-7	311	Stanford
3. Walker Little	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	6-7	315	Stanford
4. Trey Smith	University School (Jackson, TN)	6-4	310	Tennessee
5. Isaiah Wilson	Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY)	6-7	350	Georgia
6. Wyatt Davis	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	6-5	310	Ohio State
7. Calvin Ashley	St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.)	6-6	310	Auburn
8. Jedrick Wills	Lafayette (Lexington, KY)	6-5	218	Alabama
9. Austin Jackson	North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ)	6-6	280	USC
10. Andrew Thomas	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	6-5	335	Georgia
11. Cesar Ruiz	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-3	315	Michigan
12. Austin Deculus	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	6-6	331	LSU
13. Josh Myers	Miamisburg (Miamisburg, OH)	6-6	306	Ohio State
14. Tedarrell Slaton	American Heritage (Plantation, FL)	6-5	360	Florida
15. Navaughn Donaldson	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	6-6	335	Miami (Fla.)
16. Jack Anderson	Frisco (Frisco, TX)	6-5	300	Texas Tech
17. Robert Hainsey	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-5	276	Notre Dame
18. C.J. Thorpe	Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA)	6-3	318	Penn State
19. Netori Johnson	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	6-3	341	Georgia
20. Jake Moretti	Pomona (Arvada, CO)	6-5	285	Colorado
21. Tyrese Robinson	Boyd (McKinney, TX)	6-4	310	Oklahoma
22. Alijah Vera-Tucker	Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA)	6-4	291	USC
23. Chuck Filiaga	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	6-6	335	Michigan
24. Joshua Lugg	North Allegheny (Wexford, PA)	6-7	293	Notre Dame
25. Micah Clark	St. John Vianney (Holmdel, NJ)	6-5	265	Rutgers
26. Jonah Melton	Eastern Alamance (Mebane, NC)	6-4	295	North Carolina
27. Nick Brahms	Navarre (Navarre, FL)	6-4	285	Auburn
28. Wes Harris	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	6-4	290	TCU
29. Aaron Banks	El Cerrito (El Cerrito, CA)	6-7	315	Notre Dame
30. Austin Troxell	Madison Academy (Madison, AL)	6-7	335	Auburn

LINEBACKERS

Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1. Baron Browning	Kennedale (Kennedale, TX)	6-2	229	Ohio State
2. Dylan Moses	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-3	310	Alabama
3. Jacob Phillips	East Nashville Magnet (Nashville, TN)	6-4	228	LSU
4. Anthony Hines	Plano East (Plano, TX)	6-3	222	Texas A&M
5. Willie Gay	Starkville (Starkville, MS)	6-2	223	Miss. State
6. Drew Singleton	Paramus Catholic (Paramus, NJ)	6-2	215	Michigan
7. VanDarius Cowan	Palm Beach Gardens (Palm Beach Gardens, FL)	6-4	226	Alabama
8. Levi Jones	Westlake (Austin, TX)	6-3	215	USC
9. Markail Benton	Central (Phenix City, AL)	6-2	237	Alabama
10. Tadarian Moultry	Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, AL)	6-2	225	Auburn
11. Christopher Allen	Southern Lab School (Baton Rouge, LA)	6-4	234	Alabama
12. Jordan Anthony	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-0	220	Michigan
13. Levi Draper	Collinsville (Collinsville, OK)	6-4	222	Oklahoma
14. Jaden Hunter	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	6-2	212	Georgia
15. Nate McBride	Vidalia Comprehensive (Vidalia, GA)	6-1	223	Georgia
16. Avery Roberts	Concord (Wilmington, DE)	6-1	220	Nebraska
17. Leonard Warner	Brookwood (Snellville, GA)	6-4	226	Florida State
18. Nathan Proctor	Henry E. Lackey (Indian Head, MD)	6-3	200	Virginia Tech
19. Walter Grant	Cairo (Cairo, GA)	6-4	236	Georgia
20. Bruce Jordan-Swilling	Brother Martin (New Orleans, LA)	6-0	215	Georgia Tech
21. Josh Ross	St. Mary's (Orchard Lake, MI)	6-2	221	Michigan
22. David Adams	Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA)	6-2	224	Notre Dame
23. Tyler Taylor	Lanier (Buford, GA)	6-2	230	LSU
24. Dylan Rivers	Sherando (Stephens City, VA)	6-2	230	Virginia Tech
25. Breon Dixon	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	6-0	218	Ole Miss
26. Ellis Brooks	Benedictine (Richmond, VA)	6-2	233	Penn State
27. Pete Werner	Cathedral (Mount Vernon, IN)	6-3	220	Ohio State
28. K.J. Britt	Oxford (Oxford, AL)	6-0	232	Auburn
29. Tyshon Fogg	Calvert Hall (Towson, MD)	6-2	240	Rutgers
30. Will Ignont	Buckhorn (New Market, AL)	6-2	230	Tennessee

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1. Jaelan Phillips	Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA)	6-6	253	UCLA
2. Marvin Wilson	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	6-4	329	Florida State
3. Chase Young	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	6-5	251	Ohio State
4. Joshua Kaindoh	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-6	250	Florida State
5. Aubrey Solomon	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	6-3	288	Michigan
6. LaBryan Ray	James Clemens (Madison, AL)	6-4	260	Alabama
7. A.J. Epenesa	Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL)	6-5	260	Iowa
8. K'Lavon Chaisson	North Shore (Houston, TX)	6-4	220	LSU
9. Jay Tufele	Bingham (South Jordan, UT)	6-3	297	USC
10. Tyler Shelvin	Notre Dame (Crowley, LA)	6-3	376	LSU
11. Luiji Vilain	Episcopal (Alexandria, VA)	6-4	242	Michigan
12. Marlon Tuipulotu	Central (Independence, OR)	6-2	295	USC
13. Haskell Garrett	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	6-2	288	Ohio State
14. D.J. Johnson	Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA)	6-5	240	Miami (Fla.)
15. Jarez Parks	Sebastian River (Sebastian, FL)	6-3	253	Alabama
16. Phidarian Mathis	Neville (Monroe, LA)	6-4	287	Alabama
17. Robert Beal	Peachtree Ridge (Suwanee, GA)	6-4	230	Georgia
18. Greg Rogers	Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV)	6-3	305	UCLA
19. Zachary Carter	Hillsborough (Tampa, FL)	6-5	250	Florida
20. Addison Gumbs	Stellar Prep (Hayward, CA)	6-4	220	Oklahoma
21. Hunter Echols	Cathedral (Los Angeles, CA)	6-4	231	USC
22. Ja'len Parks	Newberry (Newberry, FL)	6-3	288	Florida State
23. Malik Herring	Mary Persons (Forsyth, GA)	6-4	265	Georgia
24. Darnell Ewell	Lake Taylor (Norfolk, VA)	6-4	295	Notre Dame
25. Justin Foster	Crest (Shelby, NC)	6-4	250	Clemson
26. Jake Lawler	South Mecklenburg (Charlotte, NC)	6-4	225	North Carolina
27. Jordan Williams	Frank W. Cox (Virginia Beach, VA)	6-5	260	Clemson
28. Markaviest Bryant	Crisp County (Cordele, GA)	6-4	226	Auburn
29. Taquon Graham	Temple (Temple, TX)	6-3	255	Texas
30. Yetur Matos	Chancellor (Fredericksburg, VA)	6-5	235	Penn State

DEFENSIVE BACKS

Player	High School	Ht	Wt	School
1. Jeffrey Okudah	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	6-2	190	Ohio State
2. Shaun Wade	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	6-1	177	Ohio State
3. JaCoby Stevens	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	6-1	200	LSU
4. Richard LeCounte III	Liberty County (Hinesville, GA)	5-11	174	Georgia
5. Darnay Holmes	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	5-10	190	UCLA
6. Stanford Samuels	Charles W. Flanagan (Hollywood, FL)	6-2	175	Florida State
7. Devon Hunter	Indian River (Chesapeake, VA)	6-1	205	Virginia Tech
8. Lamont Wade	Clairton (Clairton, PA)	5-9	190	Penn State
9. DeAngelo Gibbs	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	6-2	204	Georgia
10. Paris Ford	Steel Valley (Munhall, PA)	6-1	180	Pittsburgh
11. A.J. Terrell	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	6-2	180	Clemson
12. Xavier McKinney	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	6-1	192	Alabama
13. Isaiah Pryor	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-2	195	Ohio State
14. Bubba Bolden	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	6-2	192	USC
15. Grant Delpit	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-4	181	LSU
16. Deommodore Lenoir	Salesian (Los Angeles, CA)	5-11	191	Oregon
17. Jamyest Williams	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	5-9	174	South Carolina
18. Maleik Gray	LaVergne (LaVergne, TN)	6-2	190	Tennessee
19. Justin Broiles	John Marshall (Oklahoma City, OK)	6-0	175	Oklahoma
20. Thomas Graham	Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)	5-11	175	Oregon
21. Jaylon Johnson	Central East (Fresno, CA)	6-1	181	Utah
22. Todd Harris	Plaquemine (Plaquemine, LA)	6-0	180	LSU
23. Kary Vincent	Memorial (Port Arthur, TX)	5-11	170	LSU
24. Ambry Thomas	Martin Luther King (Detroit, MI)	6-0	174	Michigan
25. Cyrus Fagan	Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL)	6-2	182	Florida State
26. Robert Barnes	Carroll (Southlake, TX)	6-3	194	Oklahoma
27. Paulson Adebo	Mansfield (Mansfield, TX)	6-2	180	Stanford
28. Hamsah Nasirildeen	Concord (Concord, NC)	6-3	210	Florida State
29. Isaiah Pola-Mao	Mountain Pointe (Phoenix, AZ)	6-4	200	USC
30. Daniel Wright	Boyd Anderson (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-1	187	Alabama

BY CONFERENCE RECRUITING REPORT

RANKINGS PROVIDED BY 247COMPOSITE

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ACC

	Player	High School (Hometown)	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Cam Akers	Clinton (Clinton, MS)	RB	5-11	213	Florida State
2.	Marvin Wilson	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	DT	6-4	329	Florida State
3.	Joshua Kaindoh	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DE	6-6	250	Florida State
4.	Tee Higgins	Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN)	WR	6-5	188	Clemson
5.	Khalan Laborn	Bishop Sullivan (Virginia Beach, VA)	RB	5-10	199	Florida State
6.	Hunter Johnson	Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN)	QB	6-2	201	Clemson
7.	Stanford Samuels	Charles W. Flanagan (Hollywood, FL)	CB	6-2	175	Florida State
8.	Jeff Thomas	East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL)	WR	5-10	175	Miami (Fla.)
9.	Devon Hunter	Indian River (Chesapeake, VA)	S	6-1	205	Virginia Tech
10.	D.J. Matthews	Trinity Christian (Jacksonville, FL)	WR	5-11	160	Florida State
11.	Paris Ford	Steel Valley (Munhall, PA)	S	6-1	180	Pittsburgh
12.	A.J. Terrell	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	CB	6-2	180	Clemson
13.	Navaughn Donaldson	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	OT	6-6	335	Miami (Fla.)
14.	D.J. Johnson	Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA)	DE	6-5	240	Miami (Fla.)
15.	Cyrus Fagan	Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL)	S	6-2	182	Florida State
16.	Hamsah Nasirildeen	Concord (Concord, NC)	S	6-3	210	Florida State
17.	Amari Rodgers	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	WR	5-10	221	Clemson
18.	Ja'ten Parks	Newberry (Newberry, FL)	DT	6-3	288	Florida State
19.	Zaquandre White	North Fort Myers (North Fort Myers, FL)	RB	6-0	210	Florida State
20.	Jonah Melton	Eastern Alamance (Mebane, NC)	OG	6-4	295	North Carolina
21.	Justin Foster	Crest (Shelby, NC)	DE	6-4	250	Clemson
22.	Jake Lawler	South Mecklenburg (Charlotte, NC)	DE	6-4	225	North Carolina
23.	Jordan Williams	Frank W. Cox (Virginia Beach, VA)	DE	6-5	260	Clemson
24.	Leonard Warner	Brookwood (Snellville, GA)	LB	6-4	226	Florida State
25.	Nathan Proctor	Henry E. Lackey (Indian Head, MD)	LB	6-3	200	Virginia Tech
26.	N'Kosi Perry	Vanguard (Ocala, FL)	QB	6-4	176	Miami (Fla.)
27.	LeAnthony Williams	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	CB	6-0	170	Clemson
28.	Travis Etienne	Jennings (Jennings, LA)	RB	5-11	210	Clemson
29.	Bruce Jordan-Swilling	Brother Martin (New Orleans, LA)	LB	6-0	215	Georgia Tech
30.	C.J. Avery	Grenada (Grenada, MS)	S	6-1	196	Louisville
31.	Colin Wilson	Clay (Green Cove Springs, FL)	RB	6-1	220	Louisville
32.	Trajan Bandy	Columbus (Miami, FL)	CB	5-10	180	Miami (Fla.)
33.	A.J. Davis	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	RB	5-11	190	Pittsburgh
34.	Matt Bockhorst	St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH)	OG	6-5	297	Clemson
35.	Kai-Leon Herbert	American Heritage (Plantation, FL)	OT	6-5	284	Miami (Fla.)
36.	Dylan Rivers	Sherando (Stephens City, VA)	LB	6-2	230	Virginia Tech
37.	DeeJay Davis	Glynn Academy (Brunswick, GA)	ATH	5-11	191	Miami (Fla.)
38.	Chase Price	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	QB	6-2	207	Clemson
39.	Russ Yeast	Center Grove (Greenwood, IN)	CB	5-11	178	Louisville
40.	Jonathan Garvin	Lake Worth (Lake Worth, FL)	DE	6-4	222	Miami (Fla.)

BIG TEN

	Player	High School (Hometown)	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Jeffrey Okudah	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	CB	6-2	190	Ohio State
2.	Chase Young	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	DE	6-5	251	Ohio State
3.	Baron Browning	Kennedale (Kennedale, TX)	LB	6-2	229	Ohio State
4.	Donovan Peoples-Jones	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	WR	6-2	193	Michigan
5.	Shaun Wade	Trinity Christian Acad. (Jacksonville, FL)	CB	6-1	177	Ohio State
6.	Wyatt Davis	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	OG	6-5	310	Ohio State
7.	Aubrey Solomon	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	DT	6-3	288	Michigan
8.	A.J. Epenesa	Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL)	DE	6-5	260	Iowa
9.	Trevon Grimes	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	WR	6-3	202	Ohio State
10.	J.K. Dobbins	La Grange (La Grange, TX)	RB	5-10	199	Ohio State
11.	Cesar Ruiz	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	C	6-3	315	Michigan
12.	Lamont Wade	Clairton (Clairton, PA)	CB	5-9	190	Penn State
13.	Tyjon Lindsey	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	WR	5-9	161	Nebraska
14.	Josh Myers	Miamisburg (Miamisburg, OH)	OG	6-6	306	Ohio State
15.	Luiji Vilain	Episcopal (Alexandria, VA)	DE	6-4	242	Michigan
16.	Tate Martell	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	QB	5-11	203	Ohio State
17.	Isaiah Pryor	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	S	6-2	195	Ohio State
18.	Haskell Garrett	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	DT	6-2	288	Ohio State
19.	Drew Singleton	Paramus Catholic (Paramus, NJ)	LB	6-2	215	Michigan
20.	C.J. Thorpe	Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA)	OG	6-3	318	Penn State
21.	Ambry Thomas	Martin Luther King (Detroit, MI)	CB	6-0	174	Michigan
22.	Anthony McFarland Jr.	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	RB	5-9	203	Maryland
23.	Jordan Anthony	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LB	6-0	220	Michigan
24.	Chuck Filiaga	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	OT	6-6	335	Michigan
25.	Tarik Black	Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT)	WR	6-4	208	Michigan
26.	Dylan McCaffrey	Valor Christian (Highland Ranch, CO)	QB	6-5	196	Michigan
27.	Brendon White	Olentangy Liberty (Powell, OH)	ATH	6-2	200	Ohio State
28.	Micah Clark	St. John Vianney (Holmdel, NJ)	OT	6-5	265	Rutgers
29.	Nico Collins	Clay-Chalkville (Pinson, AL)	WR	6-5	195	Michigan
30.	Elijah Blades	John Muir (Pasadena, CA)	CB	6-2	170	Nebraska
31.	Oliver Martin	West Senior (Iowa City, IA)	WR	6-1	188	Michigan
32.	Avery Roberts	Concord (Wilmington, DE)	LB	6-1	220	Nebraska
33.	Deon Jones	Potomac (Oxon Hill, MD)	CB	6-1	180	Maryland
34.	Amir Riep	Colerain (Cincinnati, OH)	CB	5-11	185	Ohio State
35.	Jaylen Harris	Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH)	WR	6-5	210	Ohio State
36.	Sean Clifford	St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH)	QB	6-2	210	Penn State
37.	Markquese Bell	Bridgeton (Bridgeton, NJ)	ATH	6-3	194	Maryland
38.	Marcus Williamson	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	CB	5-9	180	Ohio State
39.	Tristan Gebbia	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	QB	6-3	180	Nebraska
40.	Yetur Matos	Chancellor (Fredericksburg, VA)	DE	6-5	235	Penn State

BIG 12

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Jack Anderson	Frisco (Frisco, TX)	OG	6-5	300	Texas Tech
2.	Justin Broiles	John Marshall (Oklahoma City, OK)	CB	6-0	175	Oklahoma
3.	Jalen Reagor	Waxahachie (Waxahachie, TX)	WR	5-11	195	TCU
4.	Robert Barnes	Carroll (Southlake, TX)	S	6-3	194	Oklahoma
5.	Tyrese Robinson	Boyd (McKinney, TX)	OG	6-4	310	Oklahoma
6.	Tylan Wallace	South Hills (Fort Worth, TX)	WR	6-0	179	Oklahoma State
7.	Sam Ehlinger	Westlake (Austin, TX)	QB	6-2	215	Texas
8.	Levi Draper	Collinsville (Collinsville, OK)	LB	6-4	222	Oklahoma
9.	Addison Gumbs	Stellar Prep (Hayward, CA)	DE	6-4	220	Oklahoma
10.	Tre Brown	Union (Tulsa, OK)	CB	5-11	178	Oklahoma
11.	Damion Miller	John Tyler (Tyler, TX)	WR	6-1	193	Texas
12.	CeeDee Lamb	Foster (Richmond, TX)	WR	6-3	172	Oklahoma
13.	Toneil Carter	Langham Creek (Houston, TX)	RB	5-11	197	Texas
14.	Omar Manning	Lancaster (Lancaster, TX)	WR	6-2	214	TCU
15.	Wes Harris	Aledo (Aledo, TX)	OG	6-4	290	TCU
16.	Charleston Rambo	Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX)	WR	6-2	170	Oklahoma
17.	Chris Robison	Horn (Mesquite, TX)	QB	6-2	192	Oklahoma
18.	Trey Sermon	Sprayberry (Marietta, GA)	RB	6-1	215	Oklahoma
19.	Shawn Robinson	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	QB	6-2	215	TCU
20.	Taquon Graham	Temple (Temple, TX)	DE	6-3	255	Texas

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
21.	Kennedy Brooks	Mansfield (Mansfield, TX)	RB	6-0	197	Oklahoma
22.	Grant Calcaterra	Santa Margarita Catholic (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA)	TE	6-4	207	Oklahoma
23.	Shamond Greenwood	Lakeview Centennial (Garland, TX)	WR	6-3	195	Oklahoma State
24.	Montrell Estell	Hooks (Hooks, TX)	ATH	6-2	180	Texas
25.	Marquis Hayes	Pattonville (Maryland Heights, MO)	OG	6-6	335	Oklahoma
26.	Adrian Ealy	East Ascension (Gonzales, LA)	OT	6-7	300	Oklahoma
27.	Ryan Jones	Mallard Creek (Charlotte, NC)	ATH	6-2	219	Oklahoma
28.	Isaiah Thomas	Memorial (Tulsa, OK)	DE	6-5	230	Oklahoma
29.	Creed Humphrey	Shawnee (Shawnee, OK)	C	6-4	301	Oklahoma
30.	Josh Thompson	Nacogdoches (Nacogdoches, TX)	CB	6-0	182	Texas
31.	Xavier Newman	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	OG	6-3	272	Baylor
32.	Gavin Holmes	Northwest (Justin, TX)	WR	5-11	178	Baylor
33.	Kenneth Murray	Elkins (Missouri City, TX)	LB	6-3	225	Oklahoma
34.	R.J. Sneed	Cy Ranch (Cypress, TX)	WR	6-2	180	Baylor
35.	Corey Bethley	Katy (Katy, TX)	DT	6-2	302	TCU
36.	Trestan Ebner	Henderson (Henderson, TX)	ATH	6-0	188	Baylor
37.	Derrek Pitts	South Charleston (Charleston, WV)	ATH	6-1	174	West Virginia
38.	Daniel Green	Madison (Portland, OR)	LB	6-3	230	Kansas State
39.	Reese Leitao	Jenks (Jenks, OK)	TE	6-4	234	Texas
40.	Johnathan Lovett	Cherokee (Marlton, NJ)	ATH	6-1	194	Baylor

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PAC-12

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Jaelan Phillips	Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA)	DE	6-6	253	UCLA
2.	Foster Sarell	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	OT	6-7	311	Stanford
3.	Walker Little	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	OT	6-7	315	Stanford
4.	Davis Mills	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	QB	6-3	19	Stanford
5.	Stephen Carr	Summit (Fontana, CA)	RB	6-0	202	USC
6.	Darnay Holmes	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	CB	5-10	190	UCLA
7.	Joseph Lewis	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	WR	6-2	204	USC
8.	Austin Jackson	North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ)	OT	6-6	280	USC
9.	Colby Parkinson	Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA)	TE	6-7	228	Stanford
10.	Jay Tufele	Bingham (South Jordan, UT)	DT	6-3	297	USC
11.	Marlon Tuipulotu	Central (Independence, OR)	DT	6-2	295	USC
12.	Bubba Bolden	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	S	6-2	192	USC
13.	Deommodore Lenoir	Salesian (Los Angeles, CA)	CB	5-11	191	Oregon
14.	Thomas Graham	Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)	CB	5-11	175	Oregon
15.	Jaylon Johnson	Central East (Fresno, CA)	CB	6-1	181	Utah
16.	Levi Jones	Westlake (Austin, TX)	LB	6-3	215	USC
17.	Jake Moretti	Pomona (Arvada, CO)	OT	6-5	285	Colorado
18.	Greg Johnson	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	ATH	5-10	185	USC
19.	Jack Sears	San Clemente (San Clemente, CA)	QB	6-3	200	USC
20.	Paulson Adebo	Mansfield (Mansfield, TX)	CB	6-2	180	Stanford
21.	Salvon Ahmed	Juanita (Kirkland, WA)	ATH	6-0	185	Washington
22.	Alijah Vera-Tucker	Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA)	OT	6-4	291	USC
23.	Isaiah Pola-Mao	Mountain Pointe (Phoenix, AZ)	S	6-4	200	USC
24.	Greg Rogers	Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV)	DT	6-3	305	UCLA
25.	Hunter Echols	Cathedral (Los Angeles, CA)	DE	6-4	231	USC
26.	Osiris St. Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	WR	6-2	181	Stanford
27.	Eno Benjamin	Wylie East (Wylie, TX)	RB	5-10	204	Arizona State
28.	Josh Falo	Inderkum (Sacramento, CA)	TE	6-5	235	USC
29.	Alex Perry	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	CB	5-11	178	Arizona State
30.	Hunter Bryant	Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA)	TE	6-3	238	Washington
31.	Connor Wedington	Sumner (Sumner, WA)	ATH	6-0	189	Stanford
32.	Elijah Molden	West Linn (West Linn, OR)	CB	5-11	185	Washington
33.	Jaylon Redd	Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)	CB	5-9	180	Oregon
34.	Henry Bainivalu	Skyline (Seattle, WA)	OT	6-6	290	Washington
35.	Sione Heimuli-Lund	Brighton (Cottonwood Heights, UT)	RB	6-1	237	Stanford
36.	Brett Neilon	Santa Margarita Catholic (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA)	OC	6-2	280	USC
37.	Nathan Tilford	Colony (Ontario, CA)	RB	6-2	190	Arizona
38.	Ryan Johnson	St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL)	DE	6-3	253	Stanford
39.	Tyler Johnson	Highland (Gilbert, AZ)	DE	6-4	245	Arizona State
40.	Ty Jones	Provo (Provo, UT)	WR	6-4	195	Washington

AMERICAN

	Player	High School (Hometown)	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Cordarrian Richardson	Trezevant (Memphis, TN)	RB	5-11	220	UCF
2.	Obinna Eze	Davidson Academy (Nashville, TN)	OT	6-7	279	Memphis
3.	R.J. Potts	Fishers (Fishers, IN)	S	6-2	199	Cincinnati
4.	Bryan Jones	Madison Prep Academy (Baton Rouge, LA)	DE	6-5	240	Houston
5.	Sam Crawford	Rockwall (Rockwall, TX)	WR	6-0	188	Tulsa
6.	Naytron Culpepper	Miami Carol City (Miami Gardens, FL)	S	6-0	175	USF
7.	Michael Warren	Central Catholic (Toledo, OH)	RB	5-11	200	Cincinnati
8.	Nick Robinson	Putnam City West (Oklahoma City, OK)	WR	6-3	279	Memphis
9.	Emmanuel Greene	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	WR	5-10	171	UCF
10.	Terrell Carter	Stratford (Nashville, TN)	CB	5-10	180	Memphis

MAC

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Rodney Scott	Miami Southridge (Miami, FL)	WR	6-0	175	Buffalo
2.	Kedonis Haslem	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	OG	6-3	290	Toledo
3.	Keegan Cossou	Greenville (Greenville, MI)	TE	6-5	225	Central Michigan
4.	Jairus Grissom	River Rouge (River Rouge, MI)	QB	6-2	204	Eastern Michigan
5.	Khalil Newton	Stephenson (Stone Mountain, GA)	WR	6-2	175	Ball State
6.	Josh Maize	Deerfield (Deerfield, IL)	DE	6-5	230	Miami (Ohio)
7.	Isaac Hawn	St. Charles North (St. Charles, IL)	OT	6-7	278	Northern Illinois
8.	Mitch Lewis	Naperville North (Naperville, IL)	TE	6-6	220	Miami (Ohio)
9.	Justin Gibbs	Grovetown (Grovetown, GA)	WR	6-2	200	Ball State
10.	Aapri Washington	Mountain Island (Mount Holly, NC)	CB	5-10	166	Buffalo

SUN BELT

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Kendric Haynes	Murphy (Mobile, AL)	LB	6-1	224	South Alabama
2.	Kieston Roach	North Shore (Houston, TX)	CB	5-11	170	Texas State
3.	Corey Straughter	Neville (Monroe, LA)	CB	5-11	165	ULM
4.	Chase Rogers	St. Stanislaus (Bay St. Louis, MS)	TE	6-3	238	UL Lafayette
5.	Jaylon Mascorro	Refugio (Refugio, TX)	ATH	6-2	205	New Mexico State
6.	A.J. DeShazor	Lake Gibson (Lakeland, FL)	S	6-0	185	South Alabama
7.	Dwayne Fisher	John Ehret (Marrero, LA)	OT	6-5	300	Arkansas State
8.	Lavante Epson	Washington School (Greenville, MS)	OG	6-3	315	UL Lafayette
9.	Malik Williams	Chester (Chester, SC)	ATH	5-11	175	Appalachian State
10.	Tay Pringle	Brookland-Cayce (Cayce, SC)	DT	6-2	280	Coastal Carolina

SEC

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Najee Harris	Antioch (Antioch, CA)	RB	6-3	226	Alabama
2.	Alex Leatherwood	Washington (Pensacola, FL)	OT	6-6	327	Alabama
3.	Dylan Moses	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LB	6-3	310	Alabama
4.	Trey Smith	University School (Jackson, TN)	OT	6-4	31	Tennessee
5.	Isaiah Wilson	Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY)	OT	6-7	350	Georgia
6.	JaCoby Stevens	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	S	6-1	200	LSU
7.	Jerry Jeudy	Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL)	WR	6-1	177	Alabama
8.	Richard LeCounte III	Liberty County (Hinesboro, GA)	S	5-11	174	Georgia
9.	LaBryan Ray	James Clemens (Madison, AL)	DE	6-4	260	Alabama
10.	Calvin Ashley	St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.)	OT	6-6	310	Auburn
11.	Tua Tagovailoa	St. Louis (Honolulu, HI)	QB	6-1	212	Alabama
12.	D'Andre Swift	St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA)	RB	5-9	212	Georgia
13.	Jedrick Wills	Lafayette (Lexington, KY)	OT	6-5	218	Alabama
14.	K'Lavon Chaisson	North Shore (Houston, TX)	DE	6-4	220	LSU
15.	Andrew Thomas	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	OT	6-5	335	Georgia
16.	Jake Fromm	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	QB	6-1	229	Georgia
17.	Austin Deculus	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	OT	6-6	331	LSU
18.	DeAngelo Gibbs	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	S	6-2	204	Georgia
19.	Tyler Shelvin	Notre Dame (Crowley, LA)	DT	6-3	376	LSU
20.	Xavier McKinney	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	S	6-1	192	Alabama
21.	Jacob Phillips	East Nashville Magnet (Nashville, TN)	LB	6-4	228	LSU
22.	Anthony Hines	Plano East (Plano, TX)	LB	6-3	222	Texas A&M
23.	Devonta Smith	Amite (Amite, LA)	WR	6-1	160	Alabama
24.	Grant Delpit	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	S	6-4	181	LSU
25.	Ty Chandler	MBA (Nashville, TN)	RB	5-11	187	Tennessee
26.	Tedarrell Slaton	American Heritage (Plantation, FL)	OG	6-5	360	Florida
27.	Willie Gay	Starkville (Starkville, MS)	LB	6-2	223	Mississippi State
28.	Jamyest Williams	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	CB	5-9	174	South Carolina
29.	Jhamon Ausbon	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	WR	6-3	217	Texas A&M
30.	Henry Ruggs III	Robert E. Lee (Montgomery, AL)	WR	6-0	175	Alabama
31.	Maleik Gray	LaVergne (LaVergne, TN)	S	6-2	190	Tennessee
32.	VanDarius Cowan	Palm Beach Gardens (Palm Beach Gardens, FL)	LB	6-4	226	Alabama
33.	Todd Harris	Plaquemine (Plaquemine, LA)	S	6-0	180	LSU
34.	Tyrell Shavers	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	WR	6-6	196	Alabama
35.	Netori Johnson	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	OG	6-3	341	Georgia
36.	Kary Vincent	Memorial (Port Arthur, TX)	CB	5-11	170	LSU
37.	Jarez Parks	Sebastian River (Sebastian, FL)	DE	6-3	253	Alabama
38.	Markail Benton	Central (Phenix City, AL)	LB	6-2	237	Alabama
39.	Phidarian Mathis	Neville (Monroe, LA)	DT	6-4	287	Alabama
40.	Tadarian Moultry	Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, AL)	LB	6-2	225	Auburn

C-USA

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Thomas Johnston	Spanish Fort (Spanish Fort, AL)	LB	6-2	215	UAB
2.	Darius Hodge	Wake Forest (Wake Forest, NC)	LB	6-2	217	Marshall
3.	Ahman Ross	The Bolles School (Jacksonville, FL)	S	5-11	195	FAU
4.	Jaiden Cole	Neville (Monroe, LA)	ATH	6-1	195	Louisiana Tech
5.	Emanuel Dabney	Callaway (Jackson, MS)	CB	6-1	170	Southern Miss
6.	Paul Gainer	Gautier (Gautier, MS)	OG	6-3	275	Southern Miss
7.	Jaylond Adams	Minor (Adamsville, AL)	RB	5-10	170	Southern Miss
8.	Dorian Hall	South Broward (Hollywood, FL)	ATH	6-4	200	FIU
9.	Samuel Barnes	George Ranch (Richmond, TX)	CB	6-1	194	UTSA
10.	Cody Bowes	Miami Southridge (Miami, FL)	OG	6-4	280	FIU

MOUNTAIN WEST

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt	School
1.	Jermani Brown	Midlothian (Midlothian, VA)	ATH	5-11	175	Boise State
2.	Kaegun Williams	Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX)	RB	5-9	190	San Diego State
3.	Octavius EvansW	Center (Center, TX)	WR	6-2	195	Boise State
4.	Chase Cord	Sunrise Mountain (Peoria, AZ)	QB	6-3	195	Boise State
5.	Cartrell Thomas	Lancaster (Lancaster, TX)	WR	5-9	155	Boise State
6.	Christian Cumber	Mullen (Denver, CO)	CB	6-0	190	Colorado State
7.	Marcus McElroy	Mullen (Denver, CO)	RB	5-11	202	Colorado State
8.	Darren Hall	Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)	CB	6-0	165	San Diego State
9.	Zeke Noa	Helix (La Mesa, CA)	LB	5-11	219	Boise State
10.	Aisa Kelemete	Highland (Pocatello, ID)	DE	6-4	225	Boise State

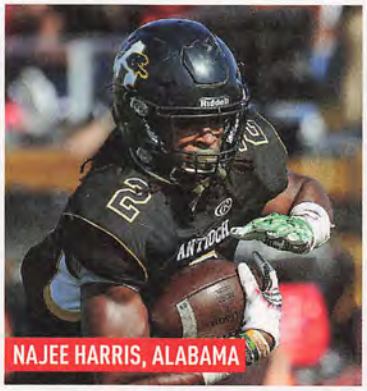
TEAM RANKINGS RECRUITING REPORT

RANKINGS PROVIDED BY 247COMPOSITE

presented by Wrangler

TOP 50 CLASSES

1. ALABAMA
2. OHIO STATE
3. GEORGIA
4. USC
5. MICHIGAN
6. FLORIDA STATE
7. LSU
8. OKLAHOMA
9. AUBURN
10. NOTRE DAME
11. FLORIDA
12. TEXAS A&M
13. MIAMI
14. STANFORD
15. PENN STATE
16. CLEMSON
17. TENNESSEE
18. MARYLAND
19. OREGON
20. UCLA
21. SOUTH CAROLINA
22. WASHINGTON
23. NEBRASKA
24. MISSISSIPPI STATE
25. VIRGINIA TECH
26. TEXAS
27. NORTH CAROLINA
28. ARKANSAS
29. KENTUCKY
30. OLE MISS
31. TCU
32. LOUISVILLE
33. UTAH
34. MICHIGAN STATE
35. COLORADO
36. PITT
37. ARIZONA STATE
38. OKLAHOMA STATE
39. WISCONSIN
40. BAYLOR
41. IOWA
42. RUTGERS
43. ARIZONA
44. WASHINGTON STATE
45. ILLINOIS
46. GEORGIA TECH
47. MISSOURI
48. DUKE
49. TEXAS TECH
50. NORTHWESTERN



NAJEE HARRIS, ALABAMA



JEFFREY OKUDAH, OHIO STATE



AUSTIN JACKSON, USC

TEAM RANKINGS

ACC
1. Florida State
2. Miami
3. Clemson
4. Virginia Tech
5. North Carolina
6. Louisville
7. Pitt
8. Georgia Tech
9. Duke
10. NC State
11. Syracuse
12. Virginia
13. Wake Forest
14. Boston College

BIG 12
1. Oklahoma
2. Texas
3. TCU
4. Oklahoma State
5. Baylor
6. Texas Tech
7. Iowa State
8. West Virginia
9. Kansas State
10. Kansas

BIG TEN
1. Ohio State
2. Michigan
3. Penn State
4. Maryland
5. Nebraska
6. Michigan State
7. Wisconsin
8. Iowa
9. Rutgers
10. Illinois
11. Northwestern
12. Minnesota
13. Indiana
14. Purdue

PAC-12
1. USC
2. Stanford
3. Oregon
4. UCLA
5. Washington
6. Utah
7. Colorado
8. Arizona State
9. Arizona
10. Washington State
11. Oregon State
12. Cal

SEC
1. Alabama
2. Georgia
3. LSU
4. Auburn
5. Florida
6. Texas A&M
7. Tennessee
8. South Carolina
9. Mississippi State
10. Arkansas
11. Kentucky
12. Ole Miss
13. Missouri
14. Vanderbilt

AMERICAN
1. UCF
2. Memphis
3. Cincinnati
4. Houston
5. USF
6. East Carolina
7. SMU
8. Navy
9. Tulsa
10. Connecticut
11. Tulane
12. Temple

C-USA
1. Florida Atlantic
2. Southern Miss
3. UTSA
4. FIU
5. Western Kentucky
6. Marshall
7. Middle Tennessee
8. Louisiana Tech
9. Charlotte
10. UAB
11. North Texas
12. Rice
13. Old Dominion
14. UTEP

MAC
1. Toledo
2. Bowling Green
3. Western Michigan
4. Ball State
5. Miami
6. Central Michigan
7. Ohio
8. Northern Illinois
9. Buffalo
10. Eastern Michigan
11. Kent State
12. Akron

MOUNTAIN WEST
1. Boise State
2. Colorado State
3. San Diego State
4. Fresno State
5. Hawaii
6. Nevada
7. Air Force
8. San Jose State
9. Wyoming
10. Utah State
11. New Mexico
12. UNLV

SUN BELT
1. Texas State
2. Troy
3. Louisiana-Monroe
4. Georgia State
5. Georgia Southern
6. Appalachian State
7. Arkansas State
8. Louisiana
9. South Alabama
10. Coastal Carolina
11. New Mexico State
12. Idaho

AP

TOP 100 RISING SENIOR CLASS OF 2018

presented by Wrangler

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt
1.	Trevor Lawrence	Cartersville (Cartersville, GA)	QB	6-6	196
2.	Xavier Thomas	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DE	6-3	263
3.	Micah Parson	Harrisburg (Harrisburg, PA)	DE	6-3	235
4.	Zamir White	Scotland County (Laurinburg, NC)	RB	6-1	220
5.	Patrick Surtain Jr.	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-2	181
6.	Jamaree Salyer	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	OG	6-4	327
7.	Jackson Carman	Fairfield (Fairfield, OH)	OT	6-6	290
8.	Matt Corral	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	QB	6-2	196
9.	Jalen Hall	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	WR	6-4	192
10.	Brey Walker	Southmoore (Moore, OK)	OT	6-7	320
11.	B.J. Foster	Angleton (Angleton, TX)	S	6-1	188
12.	Palaie Gaoteote	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	LB	6-2	235
13.	Cade Mays	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	OT	6-6	321
14.	Taron Vincent	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DT	6-2	285
15.	Terrace Marshall	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	WR	6-3	192
16.	Anthony Cook	Lamar (Houston, TX)	CB	6-1	168
17.	Lorenzo Lingard	University (Orange City, FL)	RB	6-0	190
18.	Tyreke Johnson	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	S	6-1	191
19.	Amon-Ra St. Brown	Mater Dei (Anaheim, CA)	WR	6-0	191
20.	K.J. Henry	West Forsyth (Clemmons, NC)	DE	6-6	235
21.	Teradja Mitchell	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	LB	6-2	232
22.	James Cook	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	RB	6-0	181
23.	Jacob Sirmon	Bothell (Bothell, WA)	QB	6-4	218
24.	Jaiden Woodbey	St. John Bosco (Fontana, CA)	S	6-1	209
25.	Anthony Lytton	Dr. Henry Wise (Upper Marlboro, MD)	CB	5-11	170
26.	Ricky Slade	C. D. Hylton (Woodbridge, VA)	RB	5-9	195
27.	Emory Jones	Heard County (Franklin, GA)	QB	6-3	193
28.	Isaac Taylor-Stuart	St. Augustine (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-2	187
29.	Phil Jurkovec	Pine-Richland (Gibsonia, PA)	QB	6-5	190
30.	Justyn Ross	Central (Phenix City, AL)	WR	6-3	185
31.	Justin Fields	Harrison (Kennesaw, GA)	QB	6-3	221
32.	T.J. Pledger	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	RB	5-8	190
33.	Jaelen Gill	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	RB	6-1	182
34.	Jalen Preson	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	WR	6-2	212
35.	Brendan Radley-Hiles	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	CB	5-10	183
36.	Kelvin Joseph	Scotlandville Magnet (Baton Rouge, LA)	CB	6-2	191
37.	Max Wright	Taylor (Katy, TX)	DE	6-4	270
38.	Justin Watkins	Vanguard (Ocala, FL)	WR	5-11	172
39.	Brian Hightower	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	WR	6-3	202
40.	Tyler Friday	Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ)	DT	6-3	260
41.	Brennan Eagles	Alief Taylor (Houston, TX)	WR	6-4	214
42.	Caden Sterns	Steele (Cibolo, TX)	S	6-1	192
43.	Trey Hill	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	OG	6-4	325
44.	Matthew Jones	Erasmus Hall (New York City, NY)	DT	6-4	305
45.	Greg Emerson	North Side (Jackson, TN)	DE	6-3	296
46.	Houston Griffith	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	CB	6-1	192
47.	Kamryn Babb	Christian Brothers College (St. Louis, MO)	WR	6-1	189
48.	Jacob Copeland	Escambia (Pensacola, FL)	WR	6-0	192
49.	J.J. Peterson	Colquitt County (Moultrie, GA)	LB	6-2	210
50.	Dorian Thompson-Robinson	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	QB	6-2	195
51.	Derrik Allen	Lassiter (Marietta, GA)	S	6-1	205
52.	Austin Fontaine	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	DT	6-2	312
53.	Josh Jobe	Columbus (Miami, FL)	CB	6-1	180
54.	Brenton Cox	Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA)	DE	6-4	235
55.	Max Wray	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	OT	6-7	289



TREVOR LAWRENCE



TYSON CAMPBELL

	Player	High School	Pos	Ht	Wt
56.	Tyson Campbell	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-3	180
57.	Nicholas Petit-Frere	Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-6	260
58.	Olaijah Griffin	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	CB	6-0	170
59.	Zack Kuntz	Camp Hill (Camp Hill, PA)	TE	6-8	215
60.	Solomon Tuliaupupu	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	LB	6-3	230
61.	Richard Gouraige	Cambridge Christian School (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-5	271
62.	Isheem Young	Imhotep Institute (Philadelphia, PA)	S	5-11	201
63.	Brian Snead	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	RB	5-11	200
64.	Rick Sandidge	Concord (Concord, NC)	DT	6-5	273
65.	P.J. Mustipher	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	DT	6-6	285
66.	Jahan Dotson	The Peddle School (Hightstown, NJ)	WR	6-0	160
67.	Willaim Barnes	Apopka (Apopka, FL)	OT	6-4	312
68.	Marquis Spiker	Murrieta Valley (Murrieta, CA)	WR	6-3	175
69.	Jeremy Ruckert	Lindenhurst (Lindenhurst, NY)	TE	6-6	230
70.	Raymond Scott	Narbonne (Harbor City, CA)	LB	6-2	220
71.	Josh Proctor	Owasso (Owasso, OK)	S	6-2	190
72.	Artur Sitkowski	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	QB	6-5	215
73.	Michael Thompson	Parkway North (St. Louis, MO)	DT	6-4	291
74.	Jalen Green	Heights (Houston, TX)	CB	6-1	171
75.	Al Blades Jr.	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-0	170
76.	Brevin Jordan	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	TE	6-3	257
77.	Derion Kendrick	South Pointe (Rock Hill, SC)	WR	6-1	195
78.	Robert Cooper	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	DT	6-1	350
79.	Xavier Williams	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	WR	6-1	190
80.	Joshua Moore	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	WR	6-1	156
81.	Justin Shorter	South Brunswick (Monmouth Junction, NJ)	WR	6-4	210
82.	Al'vonte Woodard	Lamar (Houston, TX)	WR	6-1	193
83.	Cameron Rising	Newbury Park (Newbury Park, CA)	QB	6-2	209
84.	Penel Sewell	Desert Hills (St. George, UT)	OT	6-4	319
85.	Justin Mascoll	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	DE	6-4	237
86.	Stephon Wynn	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DE	6-4	260
87.	Mustapha Muhammad	Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX)	TE	6-4	235
88.	C.J. Moore	Union (Tulsa, OK)	WR	6-5	175
89.	Joey Gatewood	Bartram Trail (Jacksonville, FL)	ATH	6-4	232
90.	Marquan McCall	Oak Park (Oak Park, MI)	OG	6-3	280
91.	Jalyn Armour-Davis	St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL)	CB	6-0	160
92.	Jack West	Saraland (Saraland, AL)	QB	6-4	217
93.	Aashari Crosswell	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	S	6-1	185
94.	Emil Ekiyor	Cathedral (Indianapolis, IN)	OG	6-2	322
95.	Nik Bonitto	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DE	6-3	204
96.	L'Christian Smith	Wayne (Dayton, OH)	ATH	6-6	205
97.	Devonta Jason	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	WR	6-3	211
98.	Tommy Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	OT	6-7	313
99.	Adam Anderson	Rome (Rome, GA)	LB	6-5	225
100.	Manuel Allen	Centennial (Corona, CA)	WR	6-2	175

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

ALAMO
Big 12 vs. Pac-12
Texas vs. Stanford

ARIZONA
Mountain West vs. Sun Belt
Wyoming vs. Idaho

ARMED FORCES
Army vs. Big Ten
Army vs. Minnesota

BAHAMAS
Conference USA vs. MAC
Southern Miss vs. Ohio

BELK
ACC vs. SEC
Louisville vs. Florida

BIRMINGHAM
American vs. SEC
Tulsa vs. Vanderbilt

BOCA RATON
American vs. Conference USA
UCF vs. Middle Tennessee

CACTUS
Big 12 vs. Pac-12
Kansas State vs. Utah

CAMELLIA
MAC vs. Sun Belt
Northern Illinois vs. Arkansas State

CAMPING WORLD
ACC vs. Big 12
Notre Dame vs. Oklahoma State

CITRUS
ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Miami vs. Georgia

CURE
American vs. Sun Belt
SMU vs. South Alabama

DOLLAR GENERAL
MAC vs. Sun Belt
Miami (Ohio) vs. Appalachian State

FAMOUS IDAHO POTATO
MAC vs. Mountain West
Western Michigan vs. San Diego State

FOSTER FARMS
Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Iowa vs. Washington State

FRISCO
American vs. Sun Belt/MAC
Memphis vs. Toledo

HAWAII
American vs. Mountain West
Houston vs. Hawaii

HEART OF DALLAS
Conference USA vs. Big 12
UTSA vs. TCU

HOLIDAY
Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Northwestern vs. Oregon

INDEPENDENCE
ACC vs. SEC
Pitt vs. Texas A&M

LAS VEGAS
Mountain West vs. Pac-12
Boise State vs. Colorado

LIBERTY
Big 12 vs. SEC
West Virginia vs. South Carolina

MILITARY
ACC vs. American
Georgia Tech vs. Navy

MUSIC CITY
ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Indiana vs. Kentucky

NEW MEXICO
Conference USA vs. Mountain West
BYU* vs. Colorado State

NEW ORLEANS
Conference USA vs. Sun Belt
Louisiana Tech vs. Troy

OUTBACK
Big Ten vs. SEC
Wisconsin vs. Tennessee

PINSTRIPE
ACC vs. Big Ten
North Carolina vs. Nebraska

QUICK LANE
ACC vs. Big Ten
Wake Forest vs. Michigan State

ST. PETERSBURG
American vs. Conference USA
Temple vs. WKU

SUN
ACC vs. Pac-12
NC State vs. UCLA

TAXSLAYER
ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Virginia Tech vs. Mississippi State

TEXAS
Big 12 vs. SEC
Baylor vs. Arkansas

NEW YEAR'S SIX

CHICK-FIL-A
At-large vs. At-large
Auburn vs. USF

COTTON
At-large vs. At-large
Michigan vs. Oklahoma

FIESTA
At-large vs. At-large
LSU vs. USC

ORANGE
ACC vs. Big Ten/SEC/Notre Dame
Clemson vs. Penn State


BO SCARBROUGH, ALABAMA

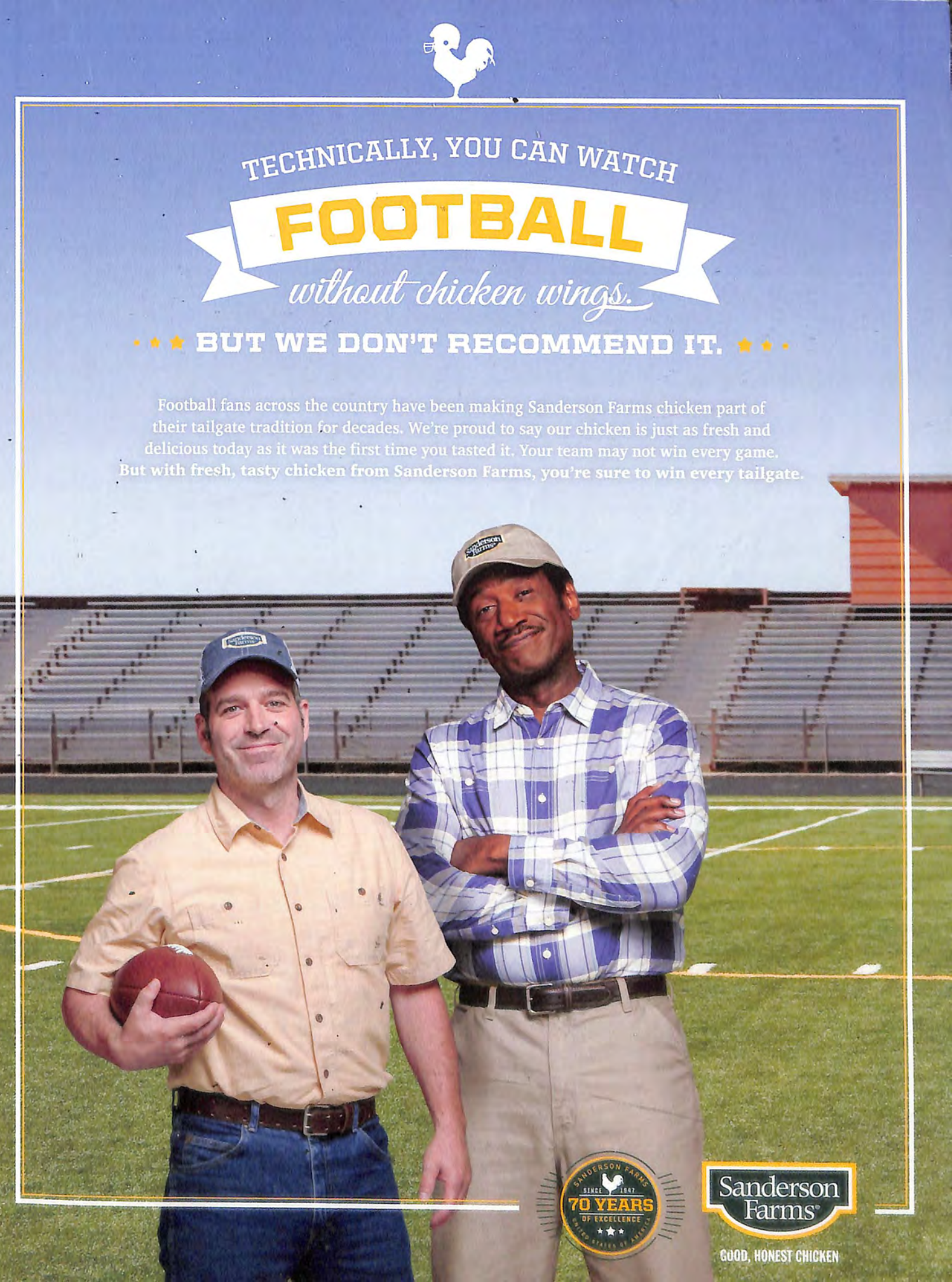
COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

National Semifinal
Rose Bowl
OHIO STATE VS. FLORIDA STATE

National Semifinal
Sugar Bowl
ALABAMA VS. WASHINGTON

National Championship
Rose Bowl winner vs. Sugar Bowl winner
ALABAMA VS. OHIO STATE

* BYU will fill one of Conference USA's bowl slots


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